SATSANG READER

PART 2

SATSANG PARICHAY

A Textbook of the Satsang Examinations Series: 11

Satsang Reader

Part 2

Translation by: BAPS Sadhus
Gujarati Text: Sadhu Bhagwatpriyadas

Inspirer: HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj

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Glossary

Blessings

The youth movement established and nourished by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj has been expanding at a very rapid pace. With a view to satisfying the aspirations and the thirst for knowledge of the youth joining the organization, and also to enable them to understand and imbibe the principles of Akshar and Purushottam expounded by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the publications division, Swaminarayan Aksharpith, organized under the auspices of Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, presents a series of books.

Through these books, it is intended to impart systematic, sustained and pure knowledge in simple language on a scholastic basis to children and youth of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. It is hoped that this Sanstha, established by Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj for implementing and propagating the Vedic ideals propounded by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, will, through this activity, spread the ideals and noble traditions of the Sampradaya and through it, the culture and heritage of the Hindu religion.

It is the aim of this project to preach and spread the divine message of Bhagwan Swaminarayan to all corners of the world. We hope that all religious-minded truth-seekers of the Sampradaya and those outside of it, will welcome this activity and extend their fullest co-operation.

In order to encourage children and youths, annual examinations are held based on the curriculum as worked out in these books. Certificates are also awarded to successful candidates. We bless Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Prof. Rameshbhai Dave, Kishorebhai Dave, and all others who have cooperated in the preparation of these books.

Shastri Narayanswarupdasji
(Pramukh Swami Maharaj)
Jai Swaminarayan

Vasant Panchmi
V.S. 2028 (1972 CE)
Atladra

Publisher's Note

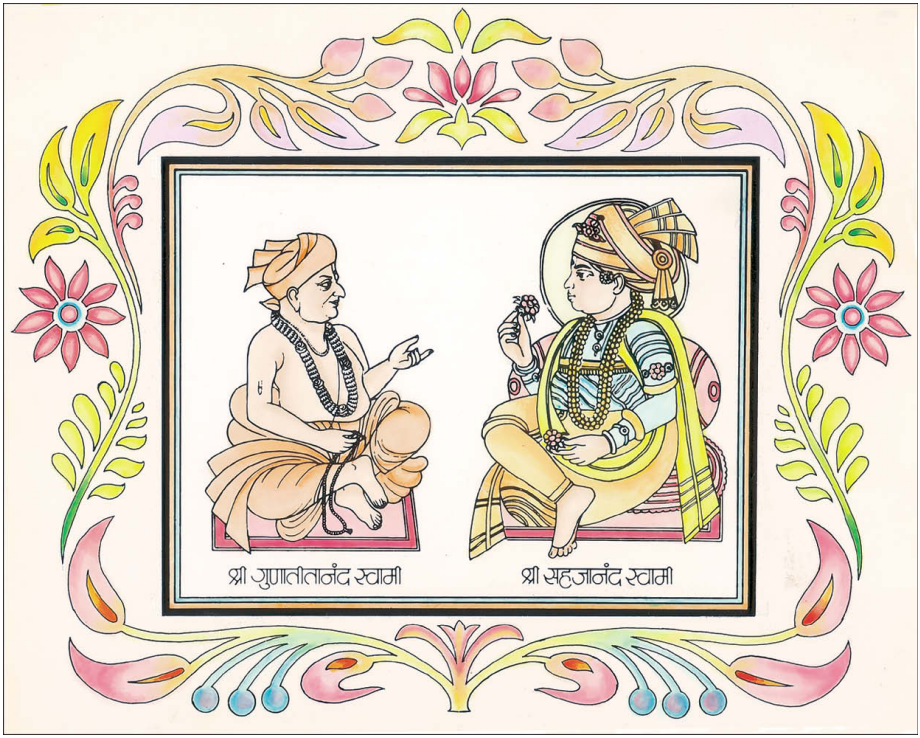
Purna Purushottam Shri Sahajanand Swami out of compassion and grace incarnated on this earth. During his life on earth, he inspired many to attain the highest spiritual state. The lives of these sadhus, and male and female devotees serve as an example for all on how to worship God and attain his divine bliss. Shriji Maharaj's work has been continued by the lineage of God-realized Sadhus he established. Spiritual seekers who have associated with them have also attained the ultimate spiritual bliss.

This publication, *Satsang Reader Part 2,* contains short biographies of a selection of such sadhus and devotees since the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. It is a translation, with slight modifications, of the Gujarati publication *Satsang Vachanmala Part 2.*

This book is part of the curriculum for the Satsang Examinations. More specifically, it is a textbook for the third of the examinations, Satsang Parichay.

It is our earnest prayer that all devotees, young and old, will study these books carefully and pass the examinations with flying colours and, above all, derive immense spiritual benefit and earn the blessings of our guru, His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

- Swaminarayan Aksharpith



Ame sau Swāminā bālak, marishu Swāmine māte;
Ame sau Shrijitanā yuvak, ladishu Shrijine māte...
Nathi dartā nathi kartā, amārā jānni parvā;
Amāre dar nathi koino, ame janmyā chhie marvā...ame 1
Ame ā yagna ārambhyo, balidāno ame daishu;
Amārā Akshar Purushottam, Gunātit jnānne gāishu...ame 2
Ame sau Shriji tanā putro, Akshare vās amāro chhe;
Svadharmi bhasma choli to, amāre kshobh shāno chhe...ame 3
Juo sau motinā Swāmi, na rākhi kai te khāmi;
Pragat Purushottam pāmi, malyā Gunātit Swāmi...ame 4

Translation

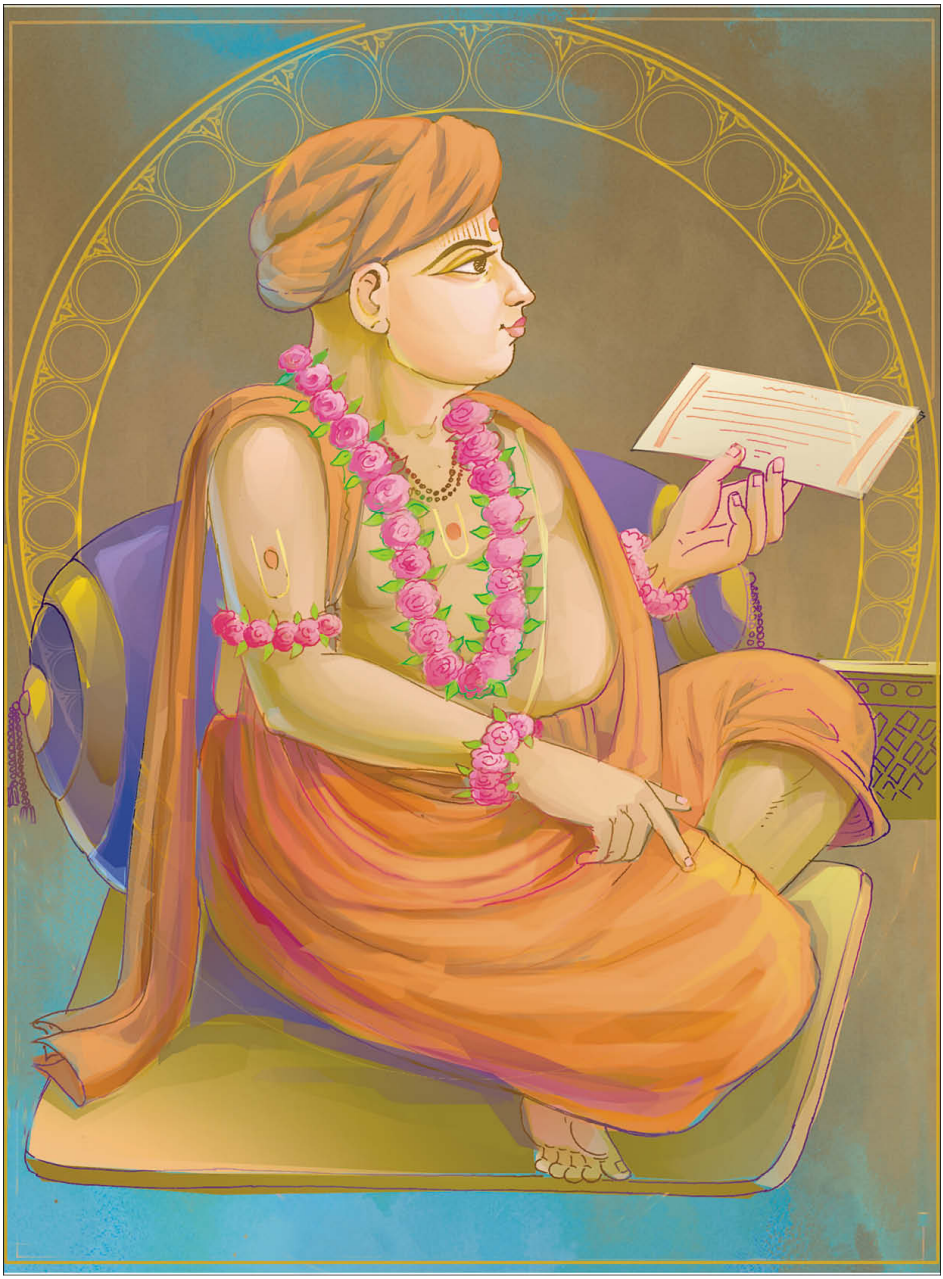
Pledge: Ame Sau Swamina Balak...

We are the children of Swami; we will die for him. We are the youths of Shriji Maharaj; we will fight for him. We are fearless; we will not shirk sacrificing our lives, for we are born to die. We have launched this movement and will undergo any suffering. We will sing the praises of Akshar-Purushottam.

We are the sons of Shriji Maharaj; we have our abode in Akshar. Consecrated as we are to *swadharma* (religious faith), we have no apprehension whatsoever. Lord Purushottam and Akshar, Gunatitanand Swami, are with us. We have accomplished our

goal.

1. Sadguru Nityanand Swami



There is a village called Datiya near Lucknow. A Brahmin called Vishnu Sharma lived there. His wife's name was Virjadevi. This pious couple led a pure life and worshipped God. They enjoyed great respect for leading their lives in accordance with

the principles of dharma. Due to the merits earned in their previous births they were blessed with two sons, whom they called Govind and Dinmani. Dinmani was born on the auspicious day on 21 March 1793 (Chaitra *sud* 9, Samvat 1849).

Of the two, Dinmani was more interested in studies than his brother. Also, his noble behaviour, courtesy and politeness made him dearer to everyone. At the age of eight, Dinmani was given the *yagnopavit* by his father in accordance with the rites prescribed by the scriptures.

With a keen desire to attain knowledge, Dinmani went to Kashi, where great scholars and pundits lived. Due to his studies and the *samskars* of previous births, he began to think, "Theoretical knowledge is for debates only. In order to realize God one must experience *gnan* and for this one must associate with a Satpurush. Such a Satpurush can be found at places of pilgrimage. Hence, Dinmani set out on a pilgrimage in search of such a Satpurush.

He visited many holy places but his intense desire to find a God-realized Sadhu or manifest God remained unfulfilled. As days passed, his hope for such a meeting waned and he became increasingly sad. He bathed in the holy waters in Jagannathpuri and Rameshwar, and prayed at sacred mandirs, but his goal of attaining a Satpurush was not achieved. Although he was disappointed, he was not disheartened. He was not prepared to give up his search and so continued his pilgrimage.

He came to Gujarat and visited Dwarika. On his way from Dwarika, he came to Visnagar. Here he received the news: "Bhagwan Swaminarayan has manifested on earth. He tours throughout Gujarat with his *paramhansas,* and thousands of spiritual seekers have sought his refuge." On hearing this, Dinmani felt great joy in his heart. He became impatient to meet Bhagwan Swaminarayan. He inquired from many people about Bhagwan Swaminarayan and at last arrived at Unjha, a town in north Gujarat.

He saw thousands of people near the lake on the outskirts of the town. There, he had darshan of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, who was seated on a raised decorated platform surrounded by his sadhus and devotees. Dinmani experienced divine bliss on seeing Bhagwan Swaminarayan. It was as if he had known him from before and his mind instantly merged into the *murti* of Maharaj. He felt, "I have attained manifest God." Like an arrow Dinmani sped towards Maharaj and fell at his feet. He prayed, "O Lord! You are everything to me. I want to be your devotee. Please keep me forever at your feet." Merciful Maharaj got up from his seat and affectionately embraced Dinmani. Maharaj read the detachment written on the lustrous face of this virtuous devotee and accepted him.

* * *

For some time, Dinmani toured with Maharaj. Then, Maharaj gave him the *bhagwati diksha* at Meghpur and named him Nityanand Swami. True to his name, Nityanand always beamed with the satisfaction of the bliss of God. He had already mastered the Vedas and other scriptures. But to attain scholarship in Nyaya, Mimansa and other Darshan Shastras, Maharaj sent him to study under a great pundit. Learning was his first love. His sharp intellect flourished by study of the Darshan Shastras. Great scholars were highly impressed by his rare scholarship and personality. Within a short

time Nityanand Swami earned great respect among the scholar-*paramhansas* of Shriji Maharaj. Maharaj appreciated his scholarship and honoured him by establishing him as one of the *sadgurus*. The pundits of the Vidvatsabha of Maharaja Sayajirao of Vadodara were jealous of the increasing popularity of the Swaminarayan Sampraday. They challenged Nityanand Swami to a debate on the scriptures. Right from the outset, Nityanand Swami found fault with their philosophical proposition and beat the pundits hollow. He established that the Swaminarayan Sampraday was Sanatan – eternal – and was in accordance with the Vedas and that the philosophy propounded by Bhagwan Swaminarayan was the best.

* * *

Once, Shriji Maharaj came to Junagadh along with Nityanand Swami and other sadhus. He was accorded a warm welcome with great pomp by the Nawab. The Nawab received Maharaj in his palace and performed puja with great love. A foolish and jealous Brahmin called Narsinh Pandya came there to defeat Maharaj in a scriptural debate. Certain jealous Nagar Brahmins who were in league with Narsinh Pandya told the Nawab, "This Narsinh Pandya wants to have a scriptural debate with Swaminarayan." When Maharaj heard this, He told the Nawab, "Let there be a debate. All his questions will be answered by Nityanand Swami." With these words, Maharaj left the royal court and returned to his lodgings.

Narsinh Pandya asked, "Why is it that we bow at God's feet and not to his hands, face, head and other parts of the body? Why do you call Swaminarayan God?" Nityanand Swami found his questions too simple and shallow. He replied, "By bowing the feet of God we offer our devotion as a servant. This is the best form of worship." The foolish Pandya remarked, "No, it is not like that. God's feet are pure, and in the rest of his body resides *maya.* That is why we worship his feet." The assembly burst into laughter on hearing this remark. The Nawab observed, "The entire body of God is pure." Thus, Pandya lost the first round but he was vain. So he asked another question, "One who wants to be God must write a commentary on the Prasthantrayi and when it is accepted by the pundits of Kashi, then only can one claim Godhood. Has this Swaminarayan Bhagwan written any such commentary?"

When Nityanand Swami heard this question, he answered, "Is the sun the sun because people call it so? Without that, will it cease to be the sun?" The Nawab lost his temper when he heard such foolish questions from Narsinh Pandya and banished him from the royal court. When the other jealous people saw this, they were discouraged as well. Then Nityanand Swami talked about the form of God, devotion, *upasana* and other topics. The Nawab was greatly pleased to hear him.

Thus, Nityanand Swami, while travelling in the company of Maharaj, greatly enhanced the prestige of the Sampraday among the scholars by participating in scholarly debates. He influenced many seekers to shed their incorrect beliefs and seek shelter at the feet of Shriji Maharaj. He was rightly called *vidyavaridhi* – an ocean of wisdom.

* * *

Nityanand Swami had an unshakable faith in the supremacy of Maharaj. While the

Satsangijivan scripture was being written at Vartal, the question of how to describe Maharaj's form was raised. Most of the sadhus compared him with incarnations like Ram and Krishna. At that time Nityanand Swami said, "Shriji Maharaj is the *avatari* of all avatars. He is the cause of all causes. He is the manifest supreme God, Purushottam Narayan. How can we say he is like other incarnations?"

The sadhus were divided on this issue. Even Shriji Maharaj himself opposed Nityanand Swami. Maharaj tried his best but Nityanand Swami was as firm as a mountain in his conviction. He didn't budge. In the end, Shriji Maharaj called him an obstinate person and excommunicated him.

Nityanand Swami stopped attending the daily *satsang* assemblies. He stopped taking meals and engaged in constant meditation and bhajan. This continued for seven days. On the eighth day Shriji Maharaj invited Nityanand Swami to the assembly, performed his puja and offered his own garland as a token of love and appreciation for his devotion. People were surprised to see this sudden change in Maharaj's attitude towards him. Maharaj then explained to the *paramhansas,* "Nityanand Swami is right in his understanding. A devotee must possess such qualities. You, too, should understand my form the way he understands it."

* * *

Nityanand Swami was quiet and serious by nature, but wasn't without a sense of humour. When celebrating the Fuldol festival, spraying colours or playing *ras,* Shriji Maharaj used to appoint him as leader of one of the groups. Swami also enthusiastically participated.

Once, Shriji Maharaj was ill. He was taking afternoon rest in the Akshar Ordi. He called Nishkulanand Swami and said to him, "Bring me a cart. I want to go to Salemal mountain to perform austerities." Nishkulanand Swami replied, "Maharaj! You are not well. We will go there as soon as you recover." Maharaj ignored his advice and insisted, "I want to go there now."

So, Shuk Muni approached Nityanand Swami and explained everything to him. Nityanand Swami went to Akshar Ordi and with the help of four people lifted Maharaj's cot and started rocking it. Maharaj sprang up and exclaimed, "Oh! Why is this cot rocking?" Nityanand Swami quietly replied, "Maharaj! The road to the Salemal mountain is like this. It is uneven and so your cot is getting jerks."

"Don't bluff. This isn't Salemal mountain. This is the Akshar Ordi," said Maharaj. Nityanand Swami replied, "Maharaj, why are you bluffing? You aren't well and yet you are talking of going to Salemal mountain?"

Maharaj heard this humorous retort and gave up his idea of going to the mountain. He replied, "Fine, I will do as you wish." Then Nityanand Swami returned to his room.

* * *

After Shriji Maharaj's departure to Dham an incident took place in Ahmedabad. Pundits belonging to various sects gathered together in Ahmedabad and resolved to defeat the Swaminarayan scholars in a debate. At that time Nityanand Swami was in Vadodara.

The pundits of the royal court went to Maharaja Sayajirao to seek his permission to

participate in the Ahmedabad debate. Sayajirao said to them, "You will have to face Nityanand Swami. Have you thought about that?" The pundits replied, "Nityanand Swami is not going to participate in this debate. Acharya Ayodhyaprasadji Maharaj of Ahmedabad has not invited any scholars from Vartal. He has restricted this debate to the learned sadhus of his own region. Moreover, Nityanand Swami is here in Vadodara." Sayajirao understood the meaning of their words and granted permission for them to participate in the debate. He said to the pundits, "If you lose the debate, your pensions will be discontinued."

Immediately after this meeting, Sayajirao sent a message to Nityanand Swami, who was camping at the local Swaminarayan mandir, "You must instantly leave for Ahmedabad. I am sending the royal coach for you." But it was not possible for him to participate in the Ahmedabad debate without the formal consent of Acharya Raghuvirji Maharaj of Vartal. So Sayajirao sent a letter to Acharya Maharaj requesting him to send Nityanand Swami to Ahmedabad. Acharya Maharaj quickly responded to the royal request and commanded Nityanand Swami to go to Ahmedabad. Nityanand Swami arrived in Ahmedabad with seven carts full of books. Also, as he himself was so bulky he alone occupied one cart. He was accompanied by his disciples, too. The pundits of Ahmedabad had thought that in the absence of Nityanand Swami they would certainly win the debate. But when they saw Nityanand Swami in the assembly all their hopes were shattered. They lost all hope of winning the debate. Such was Nityanand Swami's commanding personality.

All the questions raised in the debate were answered by one of the sadhus studying under Nityanand Swami. Even the scholars present there remarked, "All preparations were made to hunt a hare, but a lion turned up. How can one fight it?" Thus, on many such occasions Nityanand Swami had enhanced the prestige of the Swaminarayan Sampraday with his scholarly arguments.

* * *

Nityanand Swami wrote many scholarly books. He was chiefly responsible for giving an organized form to the Vachanamrut which contains the immortal divine wisdom of Shriji Maharaj. As instructed by Maharaj, to strengthen the Sampraday he wrote many other books based upon the spiritual principles revealed by Maharaj. Also, it was Nityanand Swami who had suggested to Acharya Maharaj to preserve the sanctified holy relics of Maharaj as divine mementoes. Thereupon the *acharyas* had collected such holy objects and arranged them in permanent exhibitions. Even today one can have the darshan of these sacred objects preserved in the mandirs.

Nityanand Swami contributed significantly in constructing the mandir at the site where Shriji Maharaj was cremated in Lakshmi Vadi. In accordance with the command of Maharaj every year he spent one month in the company of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami in Junagadh. On hearing the wise talks of Gunatitanand Swami regarding the need to abstain from worldly pleasures and to understand the divine form of Shriji Maharaj, Nityanand Swami used to say, "Nishkulanand Swami is uprooting the attachment to sensual pleasures by composing kirtans and Gunatitanand Swami is accomplishing the same by his discourses. He is not restricted by the

scriptural limitations."

In Vartal, on 26 November 1846 (Magshar *sud* 8, Samvat 1903), in the presence of Acharya Raghuvirji Maharaj, Gopalanand Swami, Shuk Muni, Shunyatitanandji and other sadhus, Nityanand Swami passed away.

To the very end of his life, he served the Sampraday and followed Shriji Maharaj's commands fully. Accomplishing his spiritual mission on earth, he entered Akshardham to remain in the service of Shriji Maharaj.

Maharaj Himself praised this great *sadguru* in Vachanamrut, Gadhada III 24, "Nityanand Swami (has) the virtue of desiring to please me." Again in the *Sarvamangal Stotra* everyone remembers him while singing '*Nishānitya Kathādara'*.

Nityanand Swami's scholarly works include:

Sanskrit Texts: *Hari Digvijay, Harikavach, Shri Hanuman Kavach, Shandilya Sutra Bhashya.*

Gujarati Texts: *Bhagvat Dasham Skandh Purvardh, Bhagvat Pancham Skandh, Vidur Niti, Bhagvad Gita, Vaikunth Darshan, Kapil Gita, Gunvibhag, Avatar Charitra, Narayan Kavach, Nishkam Shuddhi, Commentary on Shikshapatri.*

2. Premsakhi Premanand Swami

Premanand Swami was born into a Sathodara Nagar Brahmin family in a village1 near Nadiad (some say that he was born in the village Dora, near Bharuch) around 1784 CE (Samvat 1840). His mother was very beautiful but his father was treated as a lunatic by the people. So, after his birth, people started slandering the mother. They said, “This child is illegitimate, so the mother should either disown him or kill him. We are not going to accept it in our family.” This caused great pain to the mother.

However, bowing to social pressure, one early morning she pressed the child against her chest, went out of the village and left the child in the hole of a tree. After some

time a carder passing by suddenly saw the child lying in the hole of the tree. His joy knew no bounds on seeing the child. He thought, “I have no child of my own; here is God’s gift.” He carried the child home and said to his wife, “Look here. God has sent this child to us. Let us rejoice.” With these words, he handed over the child to his wife.

* * *

Some years later this carder visited Jetpur with his son, who was then eleven-years-old. At that time, Ramanand Swami was handing over the reins of the Sampraday to his spiritual heir, Sahajanand Swami. A grand festival was being celebrated to mark the spiritual coronation of Sahajanand Swami. Thousands of devotees had come there from different parts of the country. The carder felt that he was lucky to have this opportunity of witnessing a Hindu festival.

On the day of the coronation Sahajanand Swami mounted a horse and he was taken out in a colourful procession through the streets of the town. The carder also turned up to watch the holy procession. His son, too, watched while holding the hand of his foster father. All of a sudden, the boy freed himself and made his way through the jostling crowds up to the horse of Sahajanand Swami. He held the stirrup of the horse and started walking alongside. Shriji Maharaj saw the boy walking by the side of his horse holding the stirrup. The boy walked like this throughout the town until the procession came to a halt at Unnad Khachar’s *darbar*.

Here, in Unnad Khachar’s *darbar,* was the ashram of Ramanand Swami. The procession terminated here and after dismounting his horse Sahajanand Swami immediately went inside the ashram. The boy was so tired that he soon fell asleep on the steps of the ashram. After some time Maharaj remembered the boy, came out to look for him and found him sleeping on the steps. Maharaj stroked the boy’s head and when he awoke offered him food and water. Meanwhile, his father accompanied by some relatives came there looking for the lost child. He was very happy to see his son. He said to Maharaj, “This is my son and I am taking him home.” Maharaj gave his consent, but the boy refused to budge from the spot. The father tried his best to persuade him; he even threatened to beat him, but the boy refused to accompany the father home. At last the father gave in and went away thinking, “After all he was not my son.”

Shriji Maharaj then asked the boy, “What have you decided?” The boy replied, “I want to stay with you.” The omniscient Maharaj knew about his past *samskars* and so he said to him, “You go to Ujjain. There is a school of music on the opposite bank of the river Kshipra. You go there and learn music. After attaining this knowledge return to this region and meet me.”

* * *

In accordance with this command of Shriji Maharaj the boy set out for Ujjain and arrived at the music school. The principal of the school inquired about the purpose of his visit. The boy expressed his desire to stay there. So he was employed as a servant. With great enthusiasm the boy started serving in the institution. The music teacher was pleased with the boy and offered him lessons in music. Due to certain innate powers and the blessings of Shriji Maharaj, the boy attained mastery in both vocal and

instrumental music within a few years. One day he suddenly remembered Maharaj. He left Ujjain in search of Maharaj and by his inspiration arrived in Gadhada.

Maharaj recognized him and lovingly embraced him. He kept the boy for some time with him and then gave him *diksha* in around 1814 CE (Samvat 1870) and named him 'Nijbodhanand'. He learned a little Sanskrit also, as per the wish of Maharaj.

* * *

Once Maharaj called him in his presence and asked him to compose kirtans. Although he hadn't studied the *pingal* branch of music he started composing kirtans as per the wish of Maharaj. He minutely observed all the parts of Maharaj's body and the first kirtan he composed was a beautiful one describing the *murti* of Maharaj. Maharaj was extremely pleased on hearing it. However, the name 'Nijbodhanand' appearing towards the end of the kirtan did not rhyme properly, so Maharaj said, "Just as words Brahma, Mukta, Nishkula rhyme properly, the word 'Prema' will also rhyme. So from today your name is 'Premanand'." Once, in one of the kirtans he referred to Chandrasakhi, one of the *gopis* of Shri Krishna. Maharaj was greatly impressed by his *premlakshana bhakti* – intense affection and devotion – and called him by the name of 'Premsakhi'. Maharaj directed him to write kirtans using both these names.

* * *

Once, on the occasion of Ashadh *sud* 11 (Devpodhi Ekadashi), Maharaj was giving special vows to be observed during the auspicious *chaturmas*. At that time Premanand Swami got up and pledged, "O Maharaj! I pledge that I will daily compose eight *pads* in praise of your *murti*." Maharaj became very happy to hear him undertake such a difficult vow.

Premanand Swami has described Maharaj as manifest Purushottam in his devotional songs, and has sung them with such a melodious voice and with so much passion that every word appears charged with devotion and love. He has described every pore of Shriji Maharaj's body in great detail in language which is an inexhaustible spring of pure love. He has described the same thing again and again in various kirtans but his genius lies in giving them a touch of freshness. Every new kirtan reveals his ever-increasing love for Maharaj. Even while describing the human actions of Maharaj, his understanding of Maharaj's divinity becomes one with Maharaj's human actions. It is as if his heart is flowing out in his kirtans, such is his ever-increasing love.

* * *

Once, a devotee of Mataji came to Maharaj and sang a ballad praising her. Maharaj drew the attention of the sadhus towards the sincerity and devotion of that devotee. Premanand Swami got up and instantly composed a kirtan while focusing on the *murti* of Maharaj. He sang:

"Vandu Sahajānand rasrup anupam sārne re lol,
Jene bhajtā chhute fand, kare bhav pār ne re lol..."

Maharaj Himself started swaying to the beats and tunes of this bhajan. The whole assembly was completely spellbound. When these eight *pads* were over, Maharaj could not hide his joy. He said to Swami, "You have sung very beautiful kirtans. Hearing these kirtans, I thought that this sadhu has so much focus on the *murti* of God, that I

should get up and prostrate to him. If one meditates on God in the way described in these *pads*, one is liberated from the clutches of *kal*, karma and *maya*."

* * *

Just as Premanand Swami was overflowing with affectionate devotion towards Maharaj, Maharaj also always bestowed upon him his choicest blessings. He, too, liked to listen to him singing the devotional songs.

Once, late on a winter's night, Premanand Swami took his *sarangi* and started singing. The notes of the *sarangi* and his *sarangi*-like voice filled the air. The sweet words of the bhajan in praise of Maharaj reached the Akshar Ordi. The devotional song stirred Maharaj, who, despite the biting cold, went to where Premanand Swami was singing and quietly stood behind him, listening to him singing kirtans with utmost concentration. Premanand Swami who had become engrossed in the divine *murti* of Maharaj continued to sing one bhajan after another. The chilly, winter night passed. At dawn when he put aside his *sarangi* and stopped singing, he heard the soothing, affectionate voice of Maharaj. Premanand Swami turned around and fell at the feet of Maharaj, asking, "O Merciful Maharaj, how is it that you are here?"

"I have spent the whole night standing here listening to your melodious kirtans. Still I feel like listening to more." Premanand Swami was deeply moved to hear Maharaj paying compliments to him.

* * *

Maharaj greatly appreciated Premanand Swami's devotion and poetry. He used to bestow divine bliss upon him in many ways. Once, Maharaj, accompanied by many sadhus, went to Kutch. There, Maharaj put his hand around Premanand Swami and asked him to do likewise as they walked through the bazaar of Bhuj singing kirtans. Premanand Swami sang one line and Maharaj sang the next. Thus, through such divine exploits Maharaj bestowed upon him many such unique memories.

* * *

Once, the Nawab of Junagadh heard the music of Premanand Swami at the Swaminarayan Mandir. He felt, "Such singing from the depth of the soul is not possible anywhere in the world." Some time later some musicians from Gwalior came to sing the *drupad rag* before the Nawab. He told them, ''After listening to Premanand, a sadhu of Swaminarayan, I no longer listen to anybody else's music. His singing is matchless in this world."

So, the musicians went to Gadhada to see Maharaj. It was noon when they arrived at Dada Khachar's *darbar*. The assembly was about to disperse. But the musicians expressed their earnest desire to hear the music of Premanand Swami. Maharaj obliged and asked Premanand Swami to sing. Shriji Maharaj said him, "Sing the *bhairavi rag.*" The musicians were amused to hear the request to sing at noon a *rag* which was traditionally sung at dawn. But the moment Premanand Swami began to sing the surrounding mood changed and everyone experienced the atmosphere of dawn. The melodious notes of the *bhairavi rag* flowing through his voice turned the noon into a cool refreshing dawn. The musicians became oblivious of everything on hearing the music of Premanand Swami.

* * *

Once, after attending the *arti,* Shriji Maharaj entered the room of Vasudev Narayan. Here, Laduba and Jivuba asked a question to Maharaj, "Maharaj, you had given our father your darshan in the form of Shri Krishna. But Shri Krishna is the master of Golok whereas you say you are the master of Akshardham. So, what should we understand?" At that time Maharaj explained to them his form as Purna Purushottam – the supreme God. Premanand Swami was listening from a distance and composed four verses describing the glory of Maharaj's *murti* and his glory as the supreme Godhead.

Āj māre orde re, āvyā avināshi Albel...

and

Bolyā Shri Hari re, sāmbhalo narnāri harijan...

Maharaj was very pleased to hear these verses.

Shriji Maharaj regularly sent his *thal* as *prasad* to Premanand Swami. But after Shriji Maharaj's departure to his abode, Akshardham, this stopped. Premanand Swami couldn't bear the separation from Maharaj and did not take food or water for four to five days. He had lost interest in everything. Then he tried to cook, but he was unable to. At that time he remembered Maharaj. So he took his *saroda* and started singing:

"Sajni Shriji mujne sambhāriyā re,
Haiye harakh ati ubhrāy;
Nene āsuni dhārā vahe re,
Virahe mandu vyākul thāy, Sajni..."

(I think of my friend, Shriji, and my heart begins to overflow with joy; tears flow from my eyes and my mind is pining to meet him. The separation is too much…)

On hearing this verse Dada Khachar ran to Premanand Swami. He, too, could not stand the agony expressed in the kirtan. He requested Premanand Swami, "Swami, stop. Please don't sing such kirtans." Then he learned that Swami had not eaten for the last four or five days. Maharaj had instructed Laduba and Jivuba, "Send Thakorji's *thal* to Premanand Swami daily." But for some unknown reason this had not happened. Dada Khachar immediately arranged for the *thal* to be sent.

Separation from Maharaj was too much for Premsakhi Premanand. Everyday, after the *mangala arti* at dawn, he would sing bhajans before the *murti* of Gopinathji in Gadhada. He would continue to sing until the *rajbhog arti* just before noon and please Maharaj. Gopinathji appeared everyday from the *murti* and gave his garland to Premanand Swami.

* * *

Pleased with his poetry, Maharaj always respected him on par with great poets like Muktanand Swami, Brahmanand Swami and Nishkulanand Swami. Premanand Swami composed bhajans describing the form and glory of Maharaj to be sung during *prabhatiya*, *godi, arti, prarthana, cheshta,* etc.

Shriji Maharaj always looked upon music as an invigorating element in the Bhakti tradition. Whenever religious assemblies were held or when Maharaj visited royal courts, Premanand Swami, Muktanand Swami, Devanand Swami, Brahmanand Swami and others used to charge the atmosphere with their spiritual singing. They sang their

own compositions to the accompaniment of musical instruments like *dukkad, saroda* and *sarangi.* They used to cast such a spell that even the great music masters were wonderstruck on hearing them.

In the kirtans of Premanand Swami composed after the departure of Shriji Maharaj to his abode, one finds the pangs of separation expressed in a most moving language. On 21 November 1854 (Magshar *sud* 1, Samvat 1911) his separation from Maharaj ended and he went to Akshardham to be in the presence of Shriji Maharaj.

The outstanding works by Premsakhi Premanand Swami include: *Dhyan Manjari, Narayan Charitra, Tulsi Vivah, Gopi Virah* and *Shriharicharitra.* Besides these works, he has written over four thousand bhajans in Gujarati, Hindi and Vraj. His Drupad verses are matchless in Indian music.

The following are composed by Premanand Swami expressing the glory and commands of Shriji Maharaj:

Pad 1

Āj māre orde re, āvyā Avināshi albel;
Bāi me bolāviyā re, sundar chhogāvālo chhel..1
Nirakhyā nenā bhari re,
Natvar sundar Shri Ghanshyām;
Shobhā shi kahu re, nirakhi lāje kotik kām..2
Gunthi gulābnā re, kanthe āropyā me hār;
Laine vārnā re, charane lāgi vāramvār..3
Āpyo me to ādare re, besvā chākaliyo kari pyār;
Puchhyā pritshu re, bāi me sarve samāchār..4
Kahone Hari kyā hatā re,
kyā thaki āvyā Dharmakumār;
Sundar shobhtā re, ange sajiyā chhe shangār..5
Paheri prit shu re, surangi sunthanli sukhden;
Nādi hirni re, jotā trupt na thāye nen..6
Upar odhiyo re, gudho rento joyā lāg;
Sajni te same re,
dhanya dhanya nirakhyā tenā bhāgya..7
Mastak upare re, bāndhyu molidu amulya;
Kotik ravi shashi re, te to nāve tene tulya..8
Reshmi korno re, karmā sāhyo chhe rumāl;
Premānand to re, e chhabi nirakhi thayo nihāl..9

Pad 2

Sajni sāmbhalo re, shobhā varnavu teni teh;
Murti sambhārtā re, mujne upajyo ati saneh..1
Paheryā te same re, Harie ange alankār;
Jevā (me) nirakhiyā re, tevā varnavu karine pyār..2
Barās kapurnā re, paheryā haide sundar hār;

Torā pāghmā re, te par madhukar kare gunjār..3
Bāju berkhā re, bāye kapurnā shobhit;
Kadā kapurnā re, jotā chore saunā chitt..4
Sarve angmā re, uthe attarni bahu for;
Chore chittne re, hastā kamal nayanni kor..5
Hastā hetmā re, sahune detā sukh ānand;
Rasrup murti re, Shri Hari keval karunākand..6
Adbhut upmā re, kahetā shesh na pāme pār;
Dharine murti re, jāne āvyo rasshrungār..7
Vā'lap venmā re, nenā karunāmā bharpur;
Angoangmā re, jāne ugiyā aganit sur..8
Kartā vātdi re, boli amrut sarkhā ven;
Premānandnā re, jotā trupt na thāye nen..9

Pad 3

Bolyā Shri Hari re, sāmbhalo narnāri harijan;
Māre ek vārtā re, sahune sambhlāvyānu chhe man..1
Māri murti re, mārā lok, bhog ne mukta;
Sarve divya chhe re, tyā to joyāni chhe jukt..2
Māru Dhām chhe re, Akshar Amrut jenu nām;
Sarve sāmrathi re, shakti gune kari abhirām..3
Ati tejomay re, ravi shashi kotik vārne jāy;
Shital shānt chhe re, tejni upmā nav devāy..4
Temā hu rahu re, dvibhuj divya sadā sākār;
Durlabh devne re, Māro koi na pāme pār..5
Jiva ishwar tano re, māyā kāl purush pradhān;
Sahune vash karu re, sahuno prerak hu Bhagwān..6
Aganit vishvani re, utpatti pālan pralay thāy;
Māri marji vinā re, koithi tarnu nav todāy..7
Em mane jānjo re, mārā āshrit sāu narnāri;
Me tam āgale re, vārtā satya kahi chhe Māri..8
Hu to tam kārane re, āvyo Dhām thaki dhari deh;
Premānandno re, vā'lo varasyā amrut meh..9

Pad 4

Vali sahu sāmbhalo re, māri vārtā param anup;
Param siddhānt chhe re, sahune hitkāri sukhrup..1
Sahu haribhaktane re, jāvu hoye māre Dhām;
To Mane sevjo re, tame shuddh bhāve thai nishkām..2
Sahu haribhaktane re, rahevu hoye Māre pās;
To tame meljo re, mithyā panchvishayni āsh..3
Muj vinā jānjo re, bijā māyik sahu ākār;
Priti todjo re, juthā jāni kutumb parivār..4

Sahu tame pāljo re, sarve dradh kari mārā nem;
Tam par rijhshe re, Dharma ne Bhakti karshe kshem..5
Sant haribhaktane re, didho shikshāno updesh;
Latkā hāthnā re, kartā shobhe Natvar vesh..6
Nij jan upare re, amrut varsyā ānandkand;
Jem sahu aushadhi re, prite poshe puran chand..7
Shobhe santmā re, jem kāi uduganmā udurāj;
Ishwar ude thayā re, kalimā karvā jannā kāj..8
Ā pad shikhshe re, gāshe sāmbhalshe kari pyār;
Premānandnā re, Swāmi leshe teni sār..9

3. Mukundanand Varni (Mulji Brahmachari)

Mukundanand mukhyashcha – the foremost among all the *brahmacharis*. Who is not familiar with the name Mukundanand Varni, also known in the Sampraday as Mulji Brahmachari? Like Hanumanji he was a celibate and strictly observed the *naishthik*

vrat/eight-fold celibacy. Mulji Brahmachari made all the arrangements for Shriji Maharaj, right from morning brush to the preparation of his bed. He followed Maharaj like his shadow. He would cook food for Shriji Maharaj and fan him while he took his meals. Whenever Shriji Maharaj served food to the devotees, he would follow holding the bowl from which Maharaj was serving. Mulji Brahmachari would remember the devotee who had offered the *thal* and give him Maharaj's *prasad*. He was completely absorbed in Shriji Maharaj's *murti* and had become one with him.

It was as if he had accompanied Maharaj right from Akshardham to serve him. He was born in the village of Machhiyav in Saurashtra in an Audichya Brahmin family in 1766 CE (Samvat 1822). He was known as Muljibhai. His father worked as a priest performing Vedic rituals to support his family. Muljibhai, too, assisted his father in his work.

* * *

Once, Muljibhai was assigned to escort the daughter of one of his clients from her in-laws' house. The father-in-law allowed Muljibhai to escort the girl. They had to stop for a night halt on their way back. He made arrangements for the girl to syay in a small house and he himself slept on the verandah outside.

It was night and the place was secluded. The girl felt a tremendous sexual urge. She opened the door and came to Muljibhai who was fast asleep. As soon as he felt her presence, he sprang up from his bed and sensed her intentions. He said to her, "Sister, there is nothing to fear here. Please return to your room and sleep without any worries." The woman felt ashamed and returned to her room, but she could not control herself. So, again she rushed out to him. Muljibhai was again disturbed. He got up and uttered words of wisdom to her. He then stayed awake all throughout the night.

This incident left Muljibhai thinking on the problems of life. He thought, "Is worldly life like this? There is no worth in leading a life like this."

Right from childhood he was engrossed in devotion to God. So, when the issue of his marriage was being discussed he clearly told his father, "I want to observe absolute celibacy and worship God. I am not interested in married life." All his relatives tried their best to dissuade him, but he was firm in his resolve.

* * *

Driven by intense detachment, Muljibhai left home and went on a pilgrimage to Dwarika. On his way he arrived in the village of Loj. Here he came in contact with Ramanand Swami and became his disciple. Ramanand Swami gave him *diksha* and named him Mukundanand Varni. He was also known as Mulji Brahmachari and he observed absolute celibacy all through his life.

After Ramanand Swami had passed away, Mulji Brahmachari remained in the personal service of Shriji Maharaj.

Once, Shriji Maharaj was addressing a congregation in the Vasudev Narayan room in the *darbar* of Dada Khachar. Maharaj announced, "If anyone is found sleeping in the congregation he would be awakened with a blow from the *berkho*." Mulji Brahmachari was sitting next to Maharaj. Soon, he fell asleep and began to dream. He dreamt that he had accompanied Maharaj to a certain town where a house had caught fire. He

feared that Maharaj would be burnt. So, still dreaming, he actually lifted Maharaj along with his seat, carried him out from the assembly and placed him under a neem tree. Suddenly, because of the resulting commotion the Brahmachari awoke.

Shriji Maharaj asked him, "What happened to you?" The Brahmachari replied, "I had fallen asleep and dreamt that a house in some village had caught fire. So I lifted you and brought you out." On hearing this Maharaj turned to the sadhus and devotees seated in the assembly and said, "This Brahmachari appears to be sleeping, but in all the three states he is thinking about me."

* * *

Once in Bhadra, Maharaj gave his shoes to Mulji Brahmachari and said, "You apply oil to this pair of shoes. Don't give this work to anybody else." In accordance with Maharaj's command he started applying oil to the shoes.

At that time Vashrambhai came there and said, "You serve Maharaj everyday, so let me do this service." With these words he snatched the shoes away from the Brahmachari and started applying oil. Just at that time Maharaj passed by that spot. He turned to the Brahmachari and said, "I told you not to give this work to anyone else, yet why did you give it to Vashrambhai?" Maharaj thought that the Brahmachari was at fault. So he declared, "Go! You are excommunicated. From today you should not wear shoes. And do not eat sweet or oily food." With these words he dismissed Mulji Brahmachari from his services.

Brahmachari came to Dabhan and stayed with Ramdasbhai. In summer the mangoes at Dabhan became ripe. Ramdasbhai selected about 30 kg of mangoes and packed them in a basket for Maharaj. But who would carry the basket to Maharaj? So, the Brahmachari said, "Give it to me. I will take it." Then he walked barefooted in the intense summer heat to Gadhada. There, he laid the basket of mangoes at the feet of Shriji Maharaj, prostrated and greeted Maharaj, saying, "Jai Swaminarayan." Maharaj turned his face and did not respond.

When Brahmachari went into the town a carpenter woman recognized him. She asked, "Brahmachari! Why have you not been seen lately?" Mulji Brahmachari replied, "Maharaj does not allow me to stay with him. I carried a basket of 30 kg of mangoes to him, but he did not say even 'Narayan' to me." The woman invited the Brahmachari to her house and provided him with flour, ghee and gur. But the Brahmachari prepared plain *bati* only and returned the ghee and gur to the woman. The woman asked him, "Why didn't you use ghee and gur?" The Brahmachari replied, "Six months ago Maharaj told me not to eat these things." Hearing this, the woman immediately escorted the Brahmachari to Maharaj and told him, "Maharaj! Why have you become so unkind to the Brahmachari? In this blistering heat he walked 90 miles barefooted, carrying the basket of mangoes for you, and you didn't even say 'Jai Swaminarayan' to him!"

Shriji Maharaj smiled, and said, "I haven't refused him. Call him to me." On hearing this, the Brahmachari appeared before Maharaj and started serving him. He prepared and served Maharaj *ras-rotli* and won his blessings. The Brahmachari had realized the greatness of Maharaj. He knew that although he was not at fault, Maharaj had insulted

him and driven him away and had forbidden him from taking sweet and oily food. Still, without any grudge, he had continually kept his mind on Maharaj and had worshipped him.

* * *

The Brahmachari had total faith in Maharaj and was convinced about his supremacy and divinity.

That is why Maharaj said, "This Mukund Brahmachari understands my nature fully. He knows that Maharaj is as pure and detached as the sky. I have no prejudice against or favour towards anyone. Besides, this Mukund Brahmachari never worries and, therefore, I get along very well with him. He may not be very intelligent but he knows how to please me." Thus, Maharaj has showered much praise on Mulji Brahmachari in the Vachanamrut. Shriji Maharaj always accepted Mulji Brahmachari's service because he was a *naishthik* Brahmachari. Maharaj has said, "I prefer the service of one who is *nishkami* to anybody else's."

During *mansi puja* Mulji Brahmachari would become one with Maharaj and would ask, "What would you like to eat? *Bhajiya, puri, shak?*" In this way he would ask and continue to feed Maharaj, who, pleased by his devotion, used to appear in person to accept his food.

He used to serve Maharaj devoutly. Also, while adorning the *murti* of Gopinathji with garments and ornaments and while putting rings on all the ten fingers of the *murti* he would treat the *murti* as if it was Maharaj himself. He would do everything so carefully and make sure that he did not hurt him while performing this service. He served the *murti* with such affection.

* * *

Once Shriji Maharaj said to the Brahmachari, "Speak something in the assembly." The Brahmachari instantly got up, clapped his hands and started speaking in a loud voice, "Listen, listen. All the incarnations serve this Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Such an incarnation has never manifested before nor will any do so again. Obey his commands. There should be no lapses in following his commands." He repeated this again and again before sitting down again. Mulji Brahmachari was not a scholar nor did he understand the scriptures in any detail, but his honest talk pleased everyone.

Shriji Maharaj was very pleased and said, "This Brahmachari is not a scholar, yet he understands the essence of everything."

* * *

Once, in Gadhada, Maharaj was assigning the sadhus into pairs. At that time Brahmanand Swami asked Maharaj, "Who is this Mulji Brahmachari's companion?" Maharaj replied, "The Brahmachari's companion has been already decided. The pair of Mulanand and Sahajanand has been already determined." Such was Maharaj's intense love for Mulji Brahmachari.

The day after Maharaj had returned to Akshardham, Mulji Brahmachari went to the Akshar Ordi for darshan, and saw Maharaj lying on the cot. As per his regular practice, he offered Maharaj a *datan* and bathed him with warm water. As soon as he had finished his daily routine, Maharaj disappeared. Thus, Maharaj gave him this divine

darshan and convinced him that he is still manifest in the Akshar Ordi.

In 1846 CE (Samvat 1902), Mulji Brahmachari fell ill in Gadhada. He prayed to Maharaj, "O Maharaj, please take me to Dham." At that time Maharaj appeared to him and said, "I have built this mandir. Get it whitewashed and on completion of this work I will come to take you to Dham." With these words Shriji Maharaj disappeared. Soon after this event, he started collecting funds for this purpose, called the masons and started getting the mandir whitewashed.

In 1848 CE (Samvat 1904), the Jal Jhilani festival was celebrated in Gadhada. Acharya Raghuvirji Maharaj, Gopalanand Swami and Nityanand Swami had arrived from Vartal. Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami also had come from Junagadh to grace the function.

On the full moon day, Nityanand Swami, while addressing the assembly, said, "With great efforts Mulji Brahmachari has had this mandir whitewashed. In future, perhaps this mandir will have golden spires and a golden throne for God, but a sadhu like this Gunatitanand Swami and celibate like this Mulji Brahmachari will not be available." Thus he spread the glory of these two great ascetics.

The whitewashing of the mandir was completed. Mulji Brahmachari felt a little uncomfortable, so he took some laxative but it didn't work. An eclipse was expected that day but it did not take place. Mulji Brahmachari came to the assembly and said, "Today I want to go to Dham so let us go to the Akshar Ordi to have darshan for the last time." Everyone accompanied him to the Akshar Ordi. Brahmachari had darshan and became emotional. After performing the *pradakshina* of the Akshar Ordi, he went for the darshan of Gopinathji Maharaj. Then he asked for Thakorji's *thal* and took a little *prasad.* He called all the masons and gave them *prasad* and gifts. Then all of them started singing bhajans. Shriji Maharaj appeared with innumerable *muktas* to receive Mulji Brahmachari. The whole *darbar* was filled with the divine darshan, which was also seen by many sadhus. Mulji Brahmachari left his corporeal body to serve in the presence of Maharaj. His last rites were performed on the bank of the river Ghela behind Bhakti Baug. After the cremation was over, the eclipse took place.

Mulji Brahmachari witnessed many of Shriji Maharaj's human-like exploits, yet he never doubted his divinity. He was convinced about Shriji Maharaj's divine supremacy. He always followed him like a shadow and selflessly served him. To help us remember his example Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj consecrated a marble *murti* of Mulji Brahmachari at the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Sarangpur.

All should strive to offer dedicated selfless service and devotion with *nirdosh buddhi* like Mulji Brahmachari.

4. Acharya Ayodhyaprasadji Maharaj (First Acharya of the Ahmedabad Region)

Shriji Maharaj founded a pure Sampradaya by establishing mandirs and by initiating intelligent sadhus. But the problem of managing the mandirs efficiently was a trying one. He wanted the sadhus to remain free from administrative worries and worship God. He wanted them to inspire others to worship God, too. Therefore, he decided not to assign them the management responsibilities. Thus, all the leading *sadgurus* and devotees decided to appoint *acharyas* for this purpose and framed rules for their conduct.

Hence, two of Maharaj's nephews, Ayodhyaprasadji and Raghuvirji, were appointed

as *acharyas* of the Nar-Narayan Gadi in Ahmedabad and the Lakshmi-Narayan Gadi in Vartal, respectively.

The first *acharya* of the Ahmedabad diocese, Acharya Ayodhyaprasadji was born in Chhapaiya on 25 May 1809 (Jeth *sud* 11, Samvat 1865). His father was Rampratapbhai and his mother's name was Suvasini.

Ayodhyaprasadji was very polite by nature. Although eminent *sadgurus* were under his command, he never behaved as their superior. He was of a strong ascetic nature and he strived day and night for the progress of the Satsang.

He rigorously observed the codes of the Sampraday. He always insisted that the sadhus and devotees under his care should live up to the ideals of dharma. By the grace of Maharaj he had attained the great qualities of *atmanishtha,* etc. This is evident from incidents in his life.

Once, he had gone to a village called Gamdi near Jetalpur, accompanied by some sadhus and devotees. The devotees of that village accorded a grand reception to the Acharya Maharaj. Their joy knew no bounds and they were completely engrossed in their service. At the end of the assembly, *thal* was offered to Thakorji and then Acharya Maharaj was served food with great love. *Dudhpak* had been prepared and Acharya Maharaj was served with great insistence. When Acharya Maharaj had finished his meals, the devotees sat to eat. It was then they discovered to their embarrassment that instead of sugar, salt had been added to the *dudhpak.* All the devotees felt sorry and apologized to Acharya Maharaj. But to Ayodhyaprasadji Maharaj both salt and sugar were alike. He smiled at them and replied, "Don't be upset. One should not care for taste in God's *prasad.* One should happily accept whatever has been offered to God."

* * *

Once, Acharya Maharaj was performing *mansi puja* in Avadh Bhuvan. He was engrossed in the divine *murti* of Shriji Maharaj. All of a sudden a scorpion crawled on his back and stung him. But he was not disturbed. He continued to meditate. When he woke up from the *mansi puja* he asked his attendants, "What has happened to my back?"

The attendants said that an area of his back had become swollen and red. They also spotted a scorpion hidden in a corner. Acharya Maharaj just said, "Everyone acts according to its nature. If the evil cannot give up its nature, why should the good give up their goodness."

He was a great champion of the principle of equality. He always respected the sentiments of the senior and junior devotees alike and willingly visited their homes. His kindness had made him loved by all the sadhus and devotees. His compassion is revealed in one of his letters addressed to the *satsangis* during a drought:

" The reason I am writing this letter to you is that these are difficult times, therefore, all male and female devotees should follow the codes of the religion, worship Shriji Maharaj and remember him constantly. He is there to look after us all.

"Moreover, if you find any of our *satsangis* suffering on account of food shortage, those who are well off should collectively take care of such devotees. Do not allow them to suffer. If those devotees are not in a position to provide foodstuff, they should

give to the needy and debit the amount against my name. I will settle that account on their behalf." (20 September 1832; Bhadarva *vad* 11, Samvat 1889.)

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Acharya Shri Ayodhyaprasadji Maharaj had great reverence for Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami. In 1867 CE (Samvat 1923) the Acharya fell ill and had to fast for 13 days. Mentally, he felt uneasy. Therefore, he specially sent for Gunatitanand Swami to come to Ahmadabad. When Swami arrived, the Acharya sent an elephant, carts, and seven hundred sadhus, *parshads* and *brahmacharis* to receive him. Thus, Swami was accorded a grand reception on his arrival in Ahmedabad. After having the darshan of Thakorji, Swami went upstairs to see Ayodhyaprasadji Maharaj.

On seeing Swami, Ayodhyaprasadji Maharaj could not control his emotions. He said to Swami, "Swami, I feel at peace by your darshan." Swami replied, "Shriji Maharaj is the all-doer. The world moves according to his will. You haven't taken any food for 13 days. Please do eat something. Don't worry about anything. Maharaj will look after your welfare." At Swami's insistence, Acharya Maharaj took his meals. Swami celebrated the Ramnavmi festival in Ahmedabad as requested by Acharya Maharaj. He brought peace to every heart by giving discourses on *upasana*. Acharya Maharaj's son, who was the heir to the Ahmedabad Gadi, Shri Keshavprasadji Maharaj, was greatly impressed by Swami's talks. He gave up interest in worldly things and attended the discourses conducted by Swami every night.

Swami honoured the request of Acharya Maharaj and on the next day went with the sadhus to his *haveli* to take lunch. Acharya Maharaj brought a gold plate and requested Swami to take his food in it. He prayed, "O Swami! You are the manifest form of Maharaj, therefore you can certainly eat in this plate. By serving you, I know I am serving Maharaj. To you, gold and dust are alike. So please take your food in this plate." Swami was pleased by his sincere feelings. But he was not prepared to make any concessions in observing Shriji Maharaj's commands. As Acharya Maharaj was very insistent, he put his *pattar* in the gold plate and ate *rotlo* and *dal* in his *pattar*. Acharya Maharaj experienced peace in the presence of Swami.

Acharya Maharaj was a scholar and encouraged the spread of divine wisdom. He had the *Tattvarthadipika,* a commentary on the Satsangijivan prepared and published. He was a good poet, too. His bhajans reflect his ability as a poet. He was very fond of architecture, also. He was the chief inspiration behind the construction of the *haveli* in Ahmedabad. He built mandirs at Dungarpur, Idar, Jetalpur, Siddhpur, Mandvi, Kutch, Chhapaiya and other places.

Ayodhyaprasadji Maharaj appointed his son, Shri Keshav-prasadji Maharaj, as *acharya* and then on 1 March 1868 (Fagan *sud* 7, Samvat 1924) passed away.

5. Bhaktaraj Dada Khachar

There was a beautiful fruit orchard belonging to Lakha Patel at Umej in the Valak region of Gujarat. In that orchard there was a neem sapling near a banana plant. Two sadhus, Vitthalanand and Balanand, arrived in that orchard. They saw the neem sapling and observed, “God will sit under this neem tree.” At that time Abhal Khachar and his brother-in-law, Ghela Dhadhal, had come there for some personal work. When they heard about the neem tree, they requested Lakha Patel to give it to them. They brought the sapling to Gadhada and planted it in their *darbar*.

Abhal Khachar was a disciple of Ramanand Swami. After the demise of Ramanand

Swami he had heard that Sahajanand Swami had succeeded him.

Around that time, Sahajanand Swami went to Mancha Khachar's house in Kariyani. Mancha Bhakta invited Abhal Khachar's family for the darshan of Sahajanand Swami. It was here that he met Shriji Maharaj for the first time. He left with an impression that Maharaj was a great sadhu. Some time later, Shriji Maharaj stayed incognito in Abhal Khachar's *darbar* in Gadhada and convinced him about his divinity by giving him darshan in divine form. From that moment he became a staunch devotee of Maharaj. Also, on occasion, Maharaj sat under the neem tree he had planted, and this further strengthened his conviction in Maharaj divinity.

* * *

Abhal Khachar (Abhay Raja) had two wives, Somadevi and Surprabha. On 21 December 1800 (Posh *sud* 6, Samvat 1857), Somadevi gave birth to a son. This son was named 'Uttam'. People lovingly called him by the name of Dada Khachar. Right from childhood Dada possessed all the qualities of a devotee. When Dada was of the appropriate age, Abhal Khachar handed over the administration of his kingdom to him. He also surrendered Dada Khachar, his entire family and the reins of his kingdom at the feet of Shriji Maharaj. To honour the sentiments and love of Dada Khachar and his two sisters, Maharaj had made the *darbar* his home and decided to stay there.

Dada Khachar was very affectionate and generous. He had great love for Maharaj. It was as if he had known Maharaj from his previous birth. Not only did he love Maharaj sincerely, but he was totally convinced about the glory of Maharaj as Purna Purushottam – supreme God.

During his stay at Gadhada, Maharaj frequently went to the river Unmatt Ganga, also known as the river Ghela, to bathe in the company of sadhus and devotees. Once, while returning from the river, he saw some *bawas* camping in the open air on a hillock. When Maharaj saw them, He turned to Jiva Khachar (Dada Khachar's uncle) and said, 'These *bawas* are living here in the open. It will be good if we build a *dharmashala* or something for them." Jiva Khachar replied, "Maharaj, there are many such wandering *bawas.* How can we take care of them all?" Maharaj remained quiet.

Later, Maharaj made the same suggestion to Dada Khachar, who, with folded hands, replied, "Maharaj, I am willing to give my *darbar* for the sadhus to stay."

Maharaj asked him, "If you allow the sadhus to stay in the *darbar,* where will you live?"

"Maharaj, we will go and stay in a small hut amid the trees on the banks of the river. But how can we allow the devotees of God to suffer like this?" When Maharaj heard him speak like this, Maharaj remarked, "After all, Dada is Dada! Another like him cannot be found anywhere." Thus, Dada Khachar was always ready to honour Maharaj's command. For this he would not worry about his own life, wealth or family. To honour Shriji Maharaj's wishes he had set aside a very big portion of his *darbar* for the sadhus. He himself stayed with the sadhus, while his wife and two sisters lived with the women devotees in a separate room.

Once, Girdharbhai of Vaso came to Gadhada. While extending his invitation to Maharaj to visit Vaso, he observed, "You are bound by Dada. Will you ever come to our

place?" Maharaj replied, "Dada Khachar has surrendered everything to me. He maintains the cattle only to serve milk and curds to the sadhus. Seeing his devotion I cannot think of leaving Dada?"

* * *

When such a devotee surrenders himself to God like this, God, too, becomes subservient to him and wherever he may be God looks after him. Once, Dada Khachar was away from Gadhada on some work.

At that time some enemy invaded Gadhada. When Maharaj learnt about this, he put on some armour, took a sword and shield and came out like a soldier and said, "Don't worry about anything. I alone will destroy thousands." When Maharaj cast a glance of divine wrath at the enemy, they fled the spot. Thus Maharaj protected Gadhada in the absence of Dada Khachar.

Dada Khachar served Maharaj with deep love and devotion and Maharaj was never tired of praising him in public. Therefore, Jiva Khachar grew jealous of Dada Khachar. As Dada Khachar had no child, Jiva Khachar had an eye on his property. During that period Dada Khachar fell seriously ill. Jiva Khachar thought, "On the death of Dada, I will inherit his estate." The omniscient Maharaj read his mind and in order to thwart Jiva Khachar he advised Dada Khachar, "Dada, you assign your estate to your two sisters." Without a moment's hesitation or doubt Dada Khachar signed over his estate to his two sisters. Such was his trust im Maharaj that he didn't even think, "What will I do to survive?" When Maharaj inquired, "What will you do now?" Dada Khachar replied, "I will go to Bhavnagar and serve the king."

Then Maharaj sent for the two sisters and said, "What will you do when you have to go to Bhavnagar in connection with the estate? So appoint a manager." He called Dada Khachar back and said, "Instead of looking for a job elsewhere, stay here at the *darbar* and serve your sisters." Dada willingly accepted Maharaj's offer, and for almost a year looked after the sisters' estate.

Once, Maharaj called both the sisters and said, "Why do you need this estate? Return it to Dada Khachar." Thus, he had the estate transferred back into Dada's name. Only a most trusting devotee like Dada Khachar could have passed through such a severe test. No one else could have acted in the manner he did.

* * *

Once, out of sheer jealousy towards Dada Khachar, Jiva Khachar instigated Vajesinh Darbar of Bhavnagar, "Swaminarayan is staying with Dada Khachar's sisters in his *darbar*. This has brought stigma on our family. So call Dada Khachar to your court and reprimand him." The king of Bhavnagar, who was unaware of the glory of Swaminarayan, was shocked to hear this story about Dada Khachar's family. He decided to reprimand Dada Khachar in the royal court. Jiva Khachar's aim was to malign Dada Khachar. Moreover, he thought that perhaps a reprimand from Vajesinh Bapu would make Dada ask Swaminarayan to quit his *darbar*. In the royal court of Bhavnagar, Vajesinh asked Dada Khachar, "Have you allowed your sisters to mingle with Swaminarayan?"

Dada Khachar fearlessly replied, "Instead of giving them to some Kathi I have

offered them to God. The one who was to be attained after death, we have attained while we are alive. I think it is their great fortune." Vajesinh Darbar could not say a word after hearing Dada Khachar's unshakeable faith in Maharaj. Jiva Khachar looked crestfallen as his plans failed.

* * *

The room in which Maharaj stayed at Dada Khachar's *darbar* was known as Akshar Ordi. Once, Maharaj was seated in the Akshar Ordi. He wanted to see Dada Khachar. So He called out aloud for him from his room. At that time Dada Khachar was halfway through his haircut. As soon as he heard Maharaj calling him, he said to the barber, "Please stop now, Maharaj is calling me." He got up, covered his head and went to Maharaj in the Akshar Ordi. Maharaj said to him, "Where were you Dada?"

"I was getting my hair cut."

"Is it finished?"

"No, Maharaj. I got up halfway."

Maharaj remarked, "Look here, how much faith he has in me?" and sent him back to the waiting barber.

* * *

A longstanding dispute was going on between Dada Khachar and the Bhavnagar state regarding his estate. It had remained unresolved. Every time he went to Bhavnagar, Maharaj used to bless him, but somehow the case would be adjourned to a future date. Even then Dada Khachar never thought, "In spite of Maharaj's blessings no favourable judgement is forthcoming."

Once, in the month of Jeth, millet had been harvested ready to be stored, but there was a sudden shower and the entire yield was washed away in no time. Even then Dada Khachar was not upset for even a moment. He derived great inner strength from his understanding, "Everything Maharaj does is for our good." Thus, he had absolute devotion towards Maharaj.

* * *

There were many maidservants in the *darbar*. Once, one of them ran away with twenty-four hundred rupees. She got to the outskirts of Gadhada, but then lost her way. Wherever she looked she saw nothing but Gadhada before her eyes. So she came back and returned the money. When Maharaj learnt about this, he said to Dada Khachar, "Chop her head off." Dada Khachar replied, "Maharaj, she is old. Moreover, how can I kill a woman who chants your name?" But Maharaj sternly warned Dada Khachar, "If you behave like this, who will listen to you?" Dada Khachar again replied, "But Maharaj, how can I kill someone who worships you?" Maharaj became very happy with Dada Khachar and gave him his garland.

* * *

Maharaj wished to construct a mandir on a hillock on the banks of the Ghela. He himself went up the hill to select the spot. Jiva Khachar had a share in this hill, so Maharaj requested him to donate his land for the construction of the mandir. He bluntly said to Maharaj, "There is none to inherit Dada's property, whereas I have a large family. Therefore I cannot comply with your request." Maharaj was disappointed

and left Gadhada for Sarangpur and decided to build a mandir there. When Dada Khachar heard this, he and his two sisters went crying to Sarangpur and pleaded with Maharaj to return to Gadhada and build a mandir there. Maharaj saw their deep devotion and love for him and returned to Gadhada. Dada Khachar handed over his own residence for the building of a mandir.

Maharaj remembered Jiva Khachar's words. He thought, "I want Dada Khachar to marry again so that he can get an heir and silence Jiva Khachar." Dada Khachar, who was observing *sankhya vartman* in accordance with Maharaj's command, was not at all interested in the joys of the world. But due to Maharaj's insistence he agreed to remarry. Just as Shri Krishna had driven Arjun's chariot, Maharaj himself drove Dada Khachar's marriage chariot to Bhatvadar for the wedding. Maharaj solemnized the marriage of Dada Khachar with Jasuba, the daughter of Darbar Nagpal Varu, with great pomp. Jasuba, too, had great love for Maharaj. After several years she bore two sons – Bawa Khachar and Amra Khachar – to Dada Khachar.

* * *

Maharaj began to construct a big mandir in Dada's *darbar*. Maharaj himself carried stones on his head from the river Ghela for the foundation of the mandir. Maharaj consecrated the *murti* of Gopinathji Maharaj, which resembled him in height and appearance, and fulfilled the wish of Dada Khachar.

When Maharaj returned to Akshardham, Dada Khachar could not bear the pangs of separation and tried to plunge into the funeral fire which was consuming Maharaj's corporeal body. However, the sadhus and devotees held him and prevented him from doing so. Gunatitanand Swami and Gopalanand Swami consoled him. Maharaj appeared in person and gave him a garland of roses, and bestowed upon him divine peace and bliss.

He wasn't so well off, yet he always insisted that Maharaj stay in Gadhada. Great festivals were celebrated in his *darbar* and it remained crowded with thousands of sadhus and devotees. Yet he was never tired of them. Instead, he felt all the more happy to be with them. He had an unalloyed love towards Maharaj, who, pleased by his devotion and service, was always at his command. It is no wonder that Maharaj stayed at his house for almost thirty years. This speaks for his deep devotion and love towards Maharaj.

In 1853 CE (Samvat 1909), Dada Khachar breathed his last in Gadhada while incessantly remembering Maharaj, and entered Akshardham to serve Maharaj eternally.

6. Bhaktaraj Laduba

Abhal Khachar of Gadhada had two daughters, Jivuba and Laduba, who were older than their only brother, Dada Khachar. The younger of the two sisters was Laduba. She was also called Lalita. She was not only beautiful and virtuous but intelligent also. Due to the *samskars* of previous births, right from childhood she had developed love towards God. She had no interest in rich clothes, tasty food, etc. and had turned her mind towards the worship of Shriji Maharaj. She had cultivated the great qualities of constantly remembering Maharaj, service, firm faith and selfless devotion. She always remained at a distance from all males.

Laduba was attached to Maharaj by her loving devotion and, like the *gopis,* she had accepted God as their husband. But on the insistence of her father, Abhal Khachar, she had married Khoda Dhadhal of Botad. However, her mind remained focused only on God. Therefore, Khoda Dhadhal willingly sent her back to her parents to worship God. On seeing her back at home, Abhal Khachar lost his temper, but when he saw the letter of permission from her in-laws he became quiet and didn't utter a word. Laduba continued to worship God while staying in the *darbar*.

* * *

Maharaj looked upon Dada Khachar's *darbar* as his own home. Both the sisters and Dada Khachar had deep love for Maharaj. They would never let Maharaj go. Many sadhus also stayed with Maharaj in the *darbar*. Maharaj used to celebrate festivals frequently and would invite sadhus and devotees from different regions. With a view to make the stay of Maharaj's beloved sadhus and devotees comfortable, Dada Khachar requested his sisters to look after the arrangements personally during the festivals. When Maharaj learnt about this assignment, he called Dada Khachar and said, "Both the sisters need not be deployed together. There will be unnecessary rivalry between them. Therefore, let Jivuba look after the festivals of the bright half of the month and let Laduba take care of the festivals taking place during the dark half of the month." Both sisters willingly accepted the suggestion.

The Annakut festival was to be celebrated. Laduba approached Jivuba with a request, "O sister, you have already celebrated the festivals of Dashera and Purnima (full moon day), please allow me to celebrate the festival of Annakut which takes place during the bright half of the month."

At first Jivuba refused saying, "You celebrate the Diwali festival; this one will be managed by me alone."

But then Laduba explained, "According to the scriptures the Annakut festival is a part of the Diwali celebrations." So, Jivuba agreed to allow her to celebrate the Annakut festival. Both the sisters always competed with each other like this for the chance to serve.

Laduba, with great efforts and assistance from her friends, prepared a beautiful *annakut*. Maharaj manifested in the *murti* and accepted all the dishes and praised them. Then Maharaj himself sat the sadhus in rows and served them.

The next day Jivuba, Laduba, Rajba, Surba and many other women had assembled in a room. Suddenly, the whole room was filled with brilliant light and a luminous figure emerged from the light. The women asked Maharaj to explain this phenomenon. Maharaj replied, "It is Bhaktimata. Ask her why she has come and whether she will stay here." When the women asked her accordingly, she replied, "I was very pleased by your sincere service during the Annakut. So I have personally come to give you darshan." When they requested her to dwell among them, she replied, "I am a *pativrata* woman, so if you all observe dharma then I will stay among you." The women replied, "We will observe dharma." Then Bhaktimata said, "Then I am prepared to stay here with my son, Shriji Maharaj." With these words she disappeared.

* * *

Maharaj used to take his meals alternately with both the sisters. If he ate more at Jivuba's place, Laduba felt disappointed and when he ate more at Laduba's place Jivuba would feel that she was neglected. Thus, the two sisters used to compete with each other in their loving devotion. Therefore, Maharaj decided to eat for the first half of the month with Jivuba and during the second half of the month he dined at Laduba's place. Even then when there was any adjustment in the calendar the sisters would feel disappointed. Then Maharaj decided to alternate every ten days between the sisters. This arrangement satisfied both of them.

* * *

Once Laduba had a doubt. She asked Maharaj, "Is it true that Durvasa had eaten everything cooked by the *gopis* all by himself?" He replied, "The talks in the scriptures are the truth. I will give you an experience of this some day." Then, after some time, Laduba invited Maharaj, along with thirty devotees, for lunch. Maharaj sent Sachchidanand Swami first as he had to look after the farm. Laduba sent a Brahmin to serve Swami. He ate slowly and consumed everything that was cooked for all the guests. Yet he remained hungry. So Laduba prepared *rotla* and sent them. Still he said, "Bring more." Then Laduba sent a message to Maharaj, who advized her, "Now offer him some water." When Swami was offered water he washed his hands. Maharaj reminded Laduba of the Durvasa episode and thus removed her doubts.

* * *

Every morning Laduba served Maharaj fresh milk. One morning she came to Maharaj with a bowlful of milk. Maharaj found the odour of the milk unpleasant, so he didn't drink it and remarked, "It seems the buffalo has eaten garlic because the milk smells like that. If you want to serve me milk you should feed the buffalo at home and only serve it water drawn here. You should not send it out for grazing. Then only will I accept its milk." Thereafter, Laduba began to take care of the buffalo at home and continued to serve milk to Maharaj.

* * *

Teja Thakkar, a resident of Gadhada, had brought a new buffalo. He sent his wife to the *darbar* with a container full of milk, with a request to Laduba that it be served to Maharaj. Maharaj found the milk delicious. So, Laduba thought "How nice it would be if we had that buffalo so that we could serve its milk to Maharaj everyday." When Teja Thakkar came, Maharaj praised the taste of the milk. Maharaj went to his house personally to have a look at the buffalo. There, Maharaj asked Teja Thakkar whether he was willing to sell his buffalo. Teja Thakkar agreed. Then Maharaj inquired, "What will your children drink?" Teja Thakkar replied, "We are traders. We will buy another buffalo." Maharaj fixed the price at a hundred rupees. Then Bhaguji brought the buffalo to the *darbar*. Laduba gladly paid one hundred rupees for the buffalo.

* * *

Whenever Maharaj had to go out from Gadhada, both the sisters and Dada Khachar became very sad. They had taken a vow of eating only after the darshan of Maharaj, so that he would not go anywhere. However, Maharaj consecrated the *murti* of Vasudev Narayan in one of the rooms of the *darbar* and instructed them all to eat after darshan

of the *murti*.

* * *

Once, Laduba, Jivuba and other women prepared to accompany Maharaj, but Maharaj refused to take them along. He mounted on his mare and set off with some Kathi devotees. But the mare brought Maharaj back to the *darbar* from the outskirts of the town and stood still. Maharaj and other riders tried their best to make the mare move, but it would simply trot forward and return. In this way the mare returned thrice. So, Maharaj commented, "These women devotees are influencing the mare." Only when Maharaj permitted the women devotees to accompany him did the mare leave Gadhada for Vartal. Premanand Swami composed a song to describe this incident:

Mānkiye chadhyā re Mohan Vanmāli...
Nathi jāti darbārmāthi ghodi...

(Maharaj has mounted Manki, but the mare is refusing to leave the *darbar*…)

* * *

Maharaj once went to dine in Laduba's room. While serving him, Laduba, with folded hands, politely asked Maharaj, "Maharaj, who used to feed you and bathe you in your incarnation as Krishna?" Maharaj burst into laughter and replied, "I am the fountainhead of all the incarnations. Don't you recognize me? I have never come to this earth before, nor shall I ever come again."

* * *

It was winter. Maharaj was sleeping on a cot in the Akshar Ordi with a fire blazing nearby. Mulji Brahmachari and Naga Jogia were fast asleep. Suddenly a corner of the quilt covering Maharaj caught fire. He woke up and woke up his attendants. When Maharaj saw the burnt quilt, he said, "This quilt has been burnt. What explanation shall I give? Let us leave from here." Naja Jogia went to the *darbar* and narrated the story to Laduba and Jivuba. The sisters sent a message that there were many such quilts and nothing was more precious than Maharaj. Maharaj was very pleased to hear that the sisters had such understanding. He said, "Even if I burn their quilt, they don't see fault."

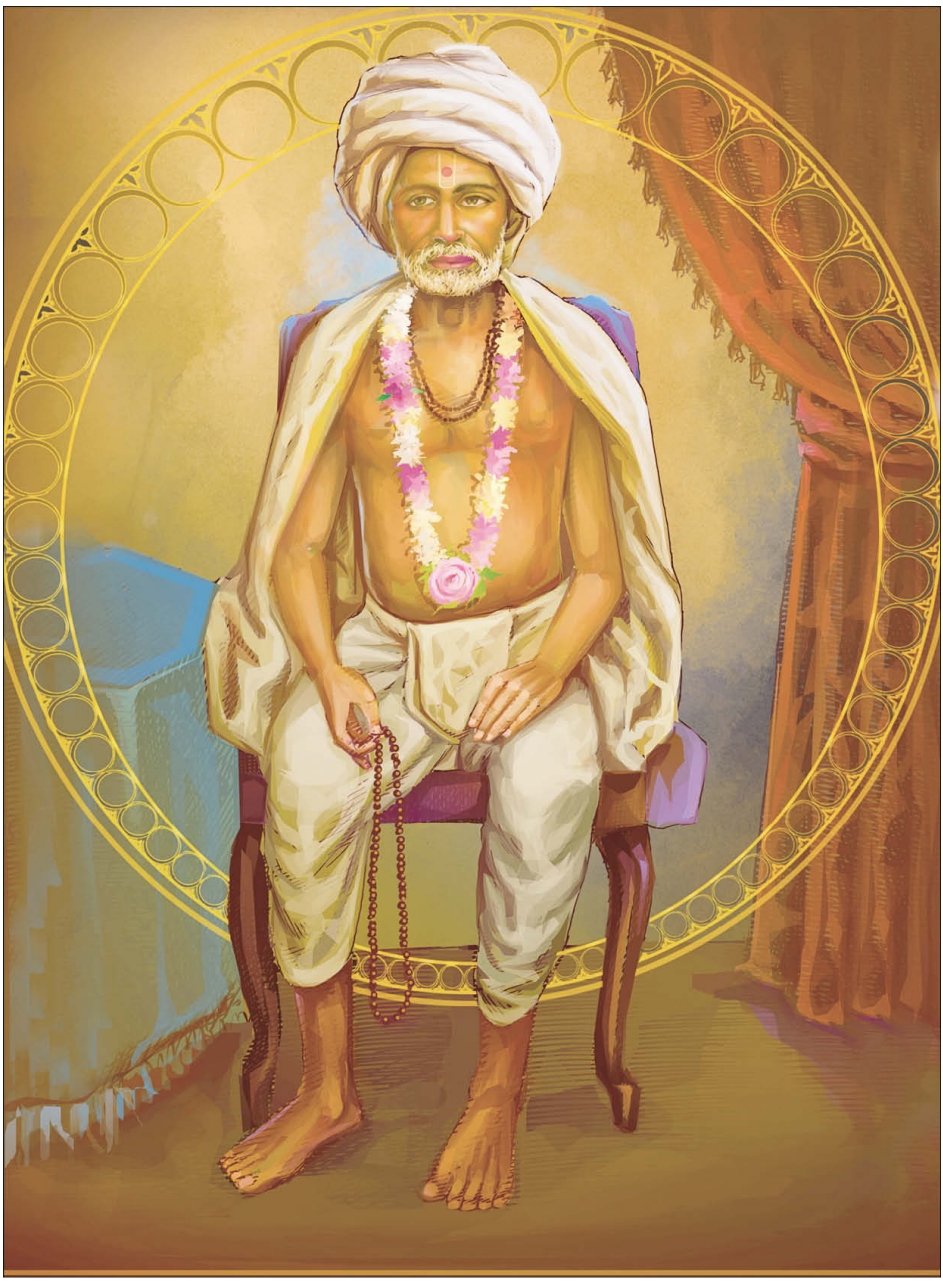
During this time, Maharaj had forbidden the women devotees from coming for his darshan. But he was very pleased by such devotion towards him and said, "Let them come for darshan." So, Naja Jogia opened the doors and let them have the darshan of Maharaj. Maharaj showed them the burnt quilt. The sisters sent a new quilt for Maharaj to use.

* * *

It was as if he had come to care for and love his devotees. Shriji Maharaj freely bestowed divine bliss upon Dada Khachar, Jivuba and Laduba. When Maharaj decided to return to Akshardham, Laduba, Jivuba, Jasuba and others beseeched Maharaj to change his mind. Maharaj consoled them saying, "I never leave the Satsang. I am ever manifest. Through the *murti* of Gopinathji I shall give you darshan." With these words Maharaj returned to Dham. True to his word, the sisters always saw the *murti* of Maharaj in place of the *murti* of Gopinathji.

Thus, Maharaj always fulfilled the desires of his most beloved devotees and always gave them the happiness of his manifest form till they breathed their last.

7. Swami Jaga Bhakta



Swami Jaga Bhakta's father's name was Raghav Bhakta and mother's name was Ratanbai. Raghav Bhakta was a staunch devotee of Shri Ram. Whenever there were

discourses on the Ramayan, he would neglect his business and go to listen to the discourses. In 1826 CE (Samvat 1882), Brahmachari Anandanandji arrived at Ambardi, where Jogidas Khuman used to live. Raghav Bhakta was attracted towards the Brahmachari. When he heard from him that Purna Purushottam Shriji Maharaj, the supreme Godhead of all incarnations was manifest on earth, he accepted the *vartman* from him and became a dedicated follower of Shriji Maharaj. Raghav Bhakta was very devout. He would frequently visit Gadhada and seek the company of the *paramhansas*. Driven by such deep devotion towards Maharaj, he was inspired to compose a kirtan in which he narrated in detail the daily routine and other divine exploits of Maharaj:

Shri Sahajānand Mahārāj Hari, jāsho mā ek pal visari...

(Sahajanand Swami is the Lord; do not forget him even for a moment…)

Anandanand Swami was very pleased by this composition and said, "Raghav Bhakta, you are a virtuous *mukta* since your last birth; a *mukta* from Akshardham shall take birth in your family."

As a result of these blessings Jaga Bhakta was born to this pious Rathod family of Ambardi on Monday 7 October 1827 (Aso *vad* 2, Samvat 1883). From childhood Jaga Bhakta was quiet and humble. He had a natural aversion towards the pleasures of the senses and worldly objects. It was second nature with him to get up early in the morning, bathe, worship God and then joyfully sing bhajans in the company of his friends. In 1839 CE (Samvat 1895), Jaga Bhakta came in contact with Mota (Senior) Paramanand Swami and he was immensely pleased to hear about the glory of Satsang and about the manifest form of Shriji Maharaj.

For business reasons, Raghav Bhakta left Ambardi and settled in Badhada. At the young age of fourteen Jaga Bhakta was married to Amarbai of Hamapar. Even then nothing could lure him towards the life of a householder.

At fifteen, Jaga Bhakta was taken seriously ill. His family thought, "This boy will not survive." But Shriji Maharaj gave him darshan and said, "You have taken birth by my wish, so you will soon recover." Soon he recovered. After this incident everyone respected Jaga Bhakta even more. Shriji Maharaj often blessed him with his divine darshan and bestowed divine bliss upon him.

* * *

As he grew older, Jaga Bhakta began to attend festivals at Gadhada and Vartal. In Vartal he regularly met Gopalanand Swami, served with him and won his favour.

In 1847 CE (Samvat 1903), Jaga Bhakta had come to Vartal. Pragji Bhakta and Jhinabhai from Mahuva had also arrived there. They sang bhajans upto midnight and then, after everyone else had gone to sleep, these three devotees approached Gopalanand Swami. With folded hands they asked, "O Swami! Please grace us and show us how we may not be separated in this life, even for a moment, from you and Shriji Maharaj." Then Gopalanand Swami looked around in all directions and whispered, "You must accept the fact that Shriji Maharaj is the fountainhead of all the avatars and is Purushottam Narayan; and that this Gunatitanand Swami (who was sleeping nearby) is the divine abode of Shriji Maharaj. Moreover, you should become *aksharrup* and seek communion with Aksharbrahman and worship Purushottam

Narayan. If you can do this much, then it doesn't matter whether you are a householder or a sadhu. You shall never be away either from Shriji Maharaj or me." For the first time they heard Gopalanand Swami talking about the glory and eminence of Gunatitanand Swami.

* * *

In 1852 CE (Samvat 1908), Gopalanand Swami passed away to Akshardham. Jaga Bhakta had developed deep devotion and love towards Gopalanand Swami. When he heard about Swami's demise, he became very sad and developed a fever. At night Gopalanand Swami appeared him in a dream and said, "I had told you to go to Junagadh if you want to become a sadhu." With these words he disappeared.

In the morning when he woke up he had firmly resolved to renounce. In 1853 CE (Samvat 1909), he left home and walked to Junagadh. Jaga Bhakta arrived in Junagadh and narrated everything to Gunatitanand Swami, who was happy to receive him and listen to his story. However, his father, Raghav Bhakta, came to Gadhada in search of him. He didn't find Jaga Bhakta there, so he decided to go to Junagadh. The *mahant* of Gadhada, Mahapurushdasji, gave him a note of recommendation addressed to Acharya Raghuvirji Maharaj. He took this letter and reached Junagadh.

Gunatitanand Swami immediately informed Jaga Bhakta, "Jaga Bhakta! There is an invitation for you." Jaga Bhakta was disappointed to hear this, since he had firmly resolved not to return to the life of a householder. Then Swami advized, "Oblige them this time and go home."

Jaga Bhakta immediately thought, "If this matter reaches Acharya Maharaj problems will arise." So, he himself suggested to his father, "It is good that you have come here to take me back. I have been waiting here for so many days thinking that it would be good if someone comes to take me back. Come on, I am coming home with you. I will worship God at home." When Raghav Bhakta reminded him about the letter to Acharya Maharaj, Jaga Bhakta replied, "Now there is no need to give it to him when I myself have decided to return home." And he tore the letter into pieces. Raghav Bhakta stayed in Junagadh for two days, sought Swami's permission and returned home with Jaga Bhakta.

They halted at a village called Kharachiyu on their way home. At night when they were fast asleep a fierce cobra descended from the roof. Jaga Bhakta turned towards the cobra and said, "Go on your way," and the cobra quietly went away.

* * *

His parents and wife, Amarbai, had great reverence towards Jaga Bhakta; it became deeper on account of the cobra episode. His wife thought, "I am a great obstacle in the path of Jaga Bhakta, who wants to renounce." So one day, in the presence of Raghav Bhakta, she spoke to Jaga Bhakta, "Please pardon me if I have done anything wrong to you. I willingly give you my consent if you want to renounce. I, too, shall lead a life of *sankhyayogini* and worship Shriji Maharaj." Raghav Bhakta was deeply moved to hear this. With the heavy heart of an affectionate father, he revealed, "Once Gopalanand Swami had indirectly told me, 'Your son will liberate innumerable souls.' " He added, "You are a great devotee of God. If you want to renounce, please happily go to

Junagadh. Our humble prayer is that at the time of our end may Shriji Maharaj come to take us to his Dham." Thus, with the consent of all, Jaga Bhakta returned to Junagadh, accepted *diksha* and lived there in the service of Swami.

* * *

In the winter of 1854 CE (Samvat 1910), Acharya Raghuvirji Maharaj came to Junagadh. In the meadows of Sankhdavadar there were nearly eighty thousand bundles of hay. Gunatitanand Swami was worried about protecting the hay. So Swami asked some of the devotees to go to Sankhdavadar and stay there. But who would agree to go when, in the presence of Acharya Maharaj, there would religious discourses and delicious rich food daily here? When Swami asked Jaga Bhakta, "Will you go to Sankhdavadar?" Jaga Bhakta humbly replied, "O Swami, you simply have to tell me to go. I am your servant, therefore, to me your command is the festival."

In accordance with the wish of Swami, Jaga Bhakta took an assistant and went to the meadows of Sankhdavadar. Acharya Maharaj stayed in Junagadh for seventeen days, while Jaga Bhakta remained in the meadows of Sankhdavadar to protect the grass and thus pleased Swami with this selfless service. There, Maharaj continuously gave Jaga Bhakta his divine darshan and granted him great joy. While seeing him off, Swami had told him, "With each and every command I give the *murti* of God." Thus he bestowed upon Jaga Bhakta the bliss of Maharaj's *murti.*

When Raghuvirji Maharaj was about to leave Junagadh, Swami sent two of his attendants to bring Jaga Bhakta back. While introducing Jaga Bhakta to Raghuvirji Maharaj, Swami said, "This Jaga Bhakta obeyed my command and resisted the temptation of attending the festival and stayed for seventeen days to protect the mandir's hay." Acharya Maharaj was greatly pleased to hear this. He embraced him with love and gave footprints on his chest and said, "By pleasing Swami, you have pleased Shriji Maharaj himself. You should never see any difference between the two." Then Swami said, "This Jaga Bhakta is our true devotee; otherwise an ordinary man could not have honoured such a command."

* * *

One day Jaga Bhakta became moodless and gloomy. He went to Swami and said, "As I was born later, I was not able to have Maharaj's darshan and did not get the chance to enjoy the bliss of his *murti.* Therefore, I feel gloomy." Swami replied, ''Four types of happiness related to Maharaj's *murti* can be attained: darshan, *prasad*, *vatu* (stories of his divine exploits), and *malvu* (to embrace him). From today I will bestow upon you all these four types of bliss. You can't see the form of Shriji Maharaj, but he remains manifest forever in me." Jaga Bhakta was delighted to hear this and was convinced that Maharaj never remains away from the Satsang. His gloom was lifted.

* * *

Gunatitanand Swami and some sadhus were going to Barpatoli in the district of Babariyawad. Swami was seated in a cart. Meanwhile, Jaga Bhakta and some sadhus were on their way to Vartal from Junagadh. They all met here. The sadhus garlanded Swami. Swami embraced them, but met Jaga Bhakta with his eyes and asked him, "Hope you are happy within?"

In Junagadh, Swami had previously embraced Jaga Bhakta over seventy times; once, he had embraced him forty times in a month. Yet, this meeting of the eyes gave him greater happiness than all that.

* * *

Once, in the afternoon assembly, Gunatitanand Swami asked Yogeshwardas Swami to read Vachanamrut, Gadhada I 61, and then gave his learned comments on it, "Devotees of God suffer in this world because this world itself is the cause of suffering." With this observation he turned to Jaga Bhakta and said, "They are all making you suffer because they know that you are my man. But if you cease to belong to me, none shall trouble you. Learn and practise the wisdom of this Vachanamrut." Jaga Bhakta was deeply moved to hear Swami. He said to Swami, "O Swami, we know that you are the most beloved of Shriji Maharaj, that I don't belong to you, even then you have kindly looked upon me as one of yours. Please do continue to own me so." Swami was pleased to hear him pray like this.

Then Swami said, "I don't like other people taunting you, so you go to Junagadh."

Jaga Bhakta replied, "Swami, I don't mind what other people say. This world is a source of misery, so it is to be expected. Also, some of the misery is from within, due to the waves of *rajogun* and *tamogun.* Therefore, if there is any pain it will affect my body or my *swabhav*, but my soul shall suffer in the least. I want to live according to your wishes."

Then Swami said, "If you have educated your followers in this way, then happily join me. I don't mind."

* * *

While Swami was in Junagadh, he had bestowed upon Jaga Bhakta the fourfold happiness of darshan*, prasadi, vatu* and *malvu*. After Gunatitanand Swami's passing away to Akshardham, Jaga Bhakta continued to stay in Junagadh. He had spent fourteen years and six months in the company of Swami. For nearly forty years Swami had enlightened the devotees of Junagadh and the Sorath region with his profound spiritual talks. During his time with Swami, Jaga Bhakta noted down these talks. They appear in the third chapter of the Swamini Vatu. These talks reflect the wisdom and unique spiritual insights of Gunatitanand Swami. They are a great treasure to all spiritual seekers and are capable of kindling the latent divinity in the hearts of devotees.

* * *

By the command of Acharya Maharaj, Jaga Bhakta toured in the Junagadh region with the sadhus. For many years he talked to the devotees of the Sorath region, giving them much joy. Like Gunatitanand Swami's discourses, his talks, too, gave much pleasure to the devotees of this region and helped them realize the Satsang philosophy. Hence, Balmukund Swami, Krishnacharan Swami, Madhavcharan Swami, Madhavpriya Swami, Narayancharan Swami and other sadhus happily invited him to join them during their tour of the regions. They had great respect for him.

His style of preaching was simple, but sharp and convincing. He could easily transform the hearts of rich and poor, young and old devotees. He convinced many

people that Shriji Maharaj is the fountainhead of all incarnations, the cause of all causes, Bhagwan Purna Purushottam himself, and that Gunatitanand Swami is the choicest disciple of Shriji Maharaj and is the abode of Maharaj. Thus, he strengthend this conviction and led them on the path of ultimate salvation. His integrated personality and actions inspired even the sadhus to follow him. Although he belonged to the *parshad* order, he avoided wealth and women in all eight forms. Except when ill, he ate only once a day. He attended all five sessions of discourses in the mandir and talked to the devotees present.

Swami Jaga Bhakta was very meek and humble. During his talks he used to say, "Never judge others' actions, figures, or flaws." He revered all the sadhus and devotees and saw the presence of Swami in them all. He had asked Shastriji Maharaj to compile list of devotees from Gujarat who had firm faith in the Akshar Purushottam philosophy, and daily recited that list after puja. Such was his reverence towards the devotees.

He used to say, "If one desires to find faults, then one should find faults with one's own body, community and nature; but never find faults with the devotees of God. I stayed with Swami, but I never made him feel obliged to me. In the same manner we should not make the God-realized Sadhu helpless by our actions. On the contrary, we should always feel indebted to them."

Jaga Bhakta always said, "Seek the company of the sadhus, realize the distinction between the animate and inanimate, and give up false pride, joys of the five senses and improper bias. Understand the real form of God, become *brahmarup* and worship Parabrahman."

* * *

His glory had spread far and wide and as a result devotees of all communities – Nagar Brahmins, Lohanas, Kanbi, Kadia, Garasiyas and others – used to visit him. They revered him as their guru. This made his rivals burn with jealousy and they spread stories that his disciples worshiped him like God. When a Nagar devotee asked him a question about such stories, he replied, "There is only one God called Sahajanand Swami, but the seekers become devotees and sadhus, and attain the enlightened, *ekantik,* state by associating with him and Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami. But none can become God."

* * *

While Gunatitanand Swami was alive, Bhagatji Maharaj used to preach openly, "Gunatitanand Swami is Mul Akshar – the heavenly abode of Shriji Maharaj. If one does not understand this, one cannot attain Akshardham." Jaga Bhakta's contribution to spreading this true *upasana* was most valuable. He talked about this divine philosophy to the sadhus and devotees who sought his company. Thus, for the first time, the philosophy of Akshar-Purushottam was systematically preached in Gujarat and Kathiawad.

* * *

In 1897 CE (Samvat 1953), the Janmashtmi festival was celebrated with great fanfare in Junagadh. On this occasion, Bhagatji Maharaj and Jaga Bhakta met each other after many years. Both of them happily recalled the old incidents from when

Gunatitanand Swami was alive. The devotees, too, rejoiced at the meeting of these two great stalwarts of the Sampraday.

Observing the enthusiasm and vigour in the Satsang, Jaga Bhakta thought, "If the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam are consecreated, it would end all doubts regarding the *upasana*." Acharya Viharilalji Maharaj had great respect Shastriji Maharaj, so Jaga Bhakta asked him to send a message to the Acharya, "If you install the dual *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam, and have a scripture like the Satsangijivan, describing the glory of Akshar Purushottam, composed, Maharaj shall bless you with two sons like Mahapurush." Jaga Bhakta was confident that as Viharilalji Maharaj was childless, he would readily agree to this proposal. But when Shastriji Maharaj returned after delivering the message, he looked spiritless and defeated.

Jaga Bhakta asked, "What happened?"

Shastriji Maharaj reported, "Acharya Maharaj tells me that Jaga Bhakta is one whose words come true. If he says, 'I will get sons like Mahapurush.' I will certainly get them, but I am helpless before these opposing sadhus. I am unable to comply with your wishes."

Jaga Bhakta became extremely disappointed. He remained speechless for some fifteen minutes. Then he said, "I thought that people spent *lakhs* of rupees to consult astrologers to get a son. I thought that if he is promised sons he would consent to my proposal and the *murtis* of the divine duo would be installed together. But he refused." He was very unhappy.

After some time he turned to Shastriji Maharaj and said, "Would you not do it?" Shastriji Maharaj replied, "Our situation is difficult. If we go to the *kothari* for even a one *paisa* postcard he asks a thousand questions. 'Are you getting married? Who do you want to marry? Who do you want to write to?' If this is the position, how can we build mandirs? Only a king or an *acharya* can do this."

On hearing him speak like this, Jaga Bhakta said, "Whatever you resolve I will help you to fulfil your resolve. So, resolve that you want to do it. You have the blessings of Bhagatji Maharaj, so you will succeed."

Shastriji Maharaj instantly said, "Your wish shall be fulfilled."

On hearing this, Jaga Bhakta became very happy and felt great joy in his heart, as if the *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam had already been consecrated.

* * *

In 1898 CE (Samvat 1954), a marriage was to be solemnized in the family of the Nawab of Junagadh. The Nawab had invited Kamalnayan Shastri, a scholar from the Dravid region (South India), to attend the function. To facilitate his personal rituals and cater for appropriate discussions he wished to stay with some scholar. Such a scholar lived in the local Swaminarayan mandir, so he arrangements were made for him to lodge there. Kothari Jibhai had to go to Veraval, so he introduced the guest to Shastriji Maharaj and left.

The Dravidian Shastri was very impressed by the pious atmosphere and the sadhus who had shunned wealth and women. All his desires for worldly pleasures were subdued. He experienced divine bliss. He thought, "I have pilgrimaged throughout the

whole of India and been to many big mandirs, but I have never experienced such divine peace. That peace is due to the presence of Shastri Yagnapurushdas. He must be a God-realized Sadhu and he must have met a powerful God-realized guru."

The Shastri approached Shastriji Maharaj and said, "O Swamiji, your talks bring joy to everyone. Even by your mere darshan one experiences great joy. This joy is divine. Therefore, I am sure you have realized God or you are in communion with some great sadhu. Will you please take me to him for darshan?"

Shastri Yagnapurushdasji thought, "Perhaps this Shastri may not readily accept the divinity in Jaga Bhakta." So, first he took him to other senior *sadgurus*. He introduced him to each one of them and praised them a lot. But the Shastri was very intelligent. He said to Shastriji Maharaj, "No doubt these sadhus are very great but you haven't introduced me to your guru, whose blessed disciple you are."

Then Shastriji Maharaj led him to the assembly hall balcony where Jaga Bhakta was seated, and said, "It is by his grace that I experience constant peace in my heart. But as he is wearing white robes I didn't take you to him first." The Dravidian scholar was pleased to meet Jaga Bhakta. He put a question to him in Sanskrit. Shastriji Maharaj explained it to Jaga Bhakta in Gujarati. Then Jaga Bhakta gave his answer in Gujarati which in turn was translated into Sanskrit by Shastriji Maharaj. Thus Jaga Bhakta gave his learned comments on Vachanamruts, Gadhada I 54 and Gadhada II 54. On hearing him speak like a scholar, Kamalnayan Shastri was convinced that he was a true mahatma and experienced peace in his heart.

* * *

The work of such a great devotee like Jaga Bhakta was now nearing the end. He had lived as a renunciant in the Junagadh mandir for forty-eight years and toured the villages, guiding thousands of people onto the path of righteousness and explaining to them the true *upasana*.

His gaze was always towards the ground. He wore a short *kediyu,* donned a short dhoti and a long scarf on the head. Although he was a *parshad,* like the sadhus, he always travelled with a companion. While walking he would wrap the rosary around his right wrist and hold a small stick in his left hand.

Shastriji Maharaj had felt great disappointment because he had not been able to serve Bhagatji Maharaj in his final days before he returned to Dham. At that time Jaga Bhakta had promised that he would certainly send for him at the time of his own departure. He had said, "I will call you when I breathe my last."

In November 1900 CE (Magshar, Samvat 1957), Jaga Bhakta fell ill. The devotees from Dangra requested him to come there for a change and rest. So he went to Dangra. But even there his health did not improve. Krishnaji Ada and other beloved devotees had already arrived there from Rajkot. Swami Jaga Bhakta asked the devotees to call Shastriji Maharaj immediately by sending him a telegram.

Shastriji Maharaj had gone to Botad with Prabhudas Kothari to bring timber for the Sarangpur mandir. A *parshad* from Sarangpur went there with the telegram: "Jaga Swami is seriously ill and remembers you. Come to Dangra immediately." When he read the telegram he cancelled his trip to Bhavnagar and sent the attendant back to

Sarangpur on horseback to bring his *pattar,* puja and dhotis. He took a junior sadhu with him and went directly to Dangra. On 26 January 1901 (Maha *sud* 7, Samvat 1957), Shastriji Maharaj reached Dangra. Swami Jaga Bhakta was seriously ill. He did not allow anybody to visit him in his room, but he had requested, "When Shastri Yagnapurushdas arrives bring him immediately to me." So, on arrival Shastriji Maharaj was taken directly to him. The moment Jaga Bhakta saw him he sat up on his bed. He embraced Shastriji Maharaj with great affection. Shastriji Maharaj understood that it was the last phase of Jaga Bhakta's life and tears ran from his eyes.

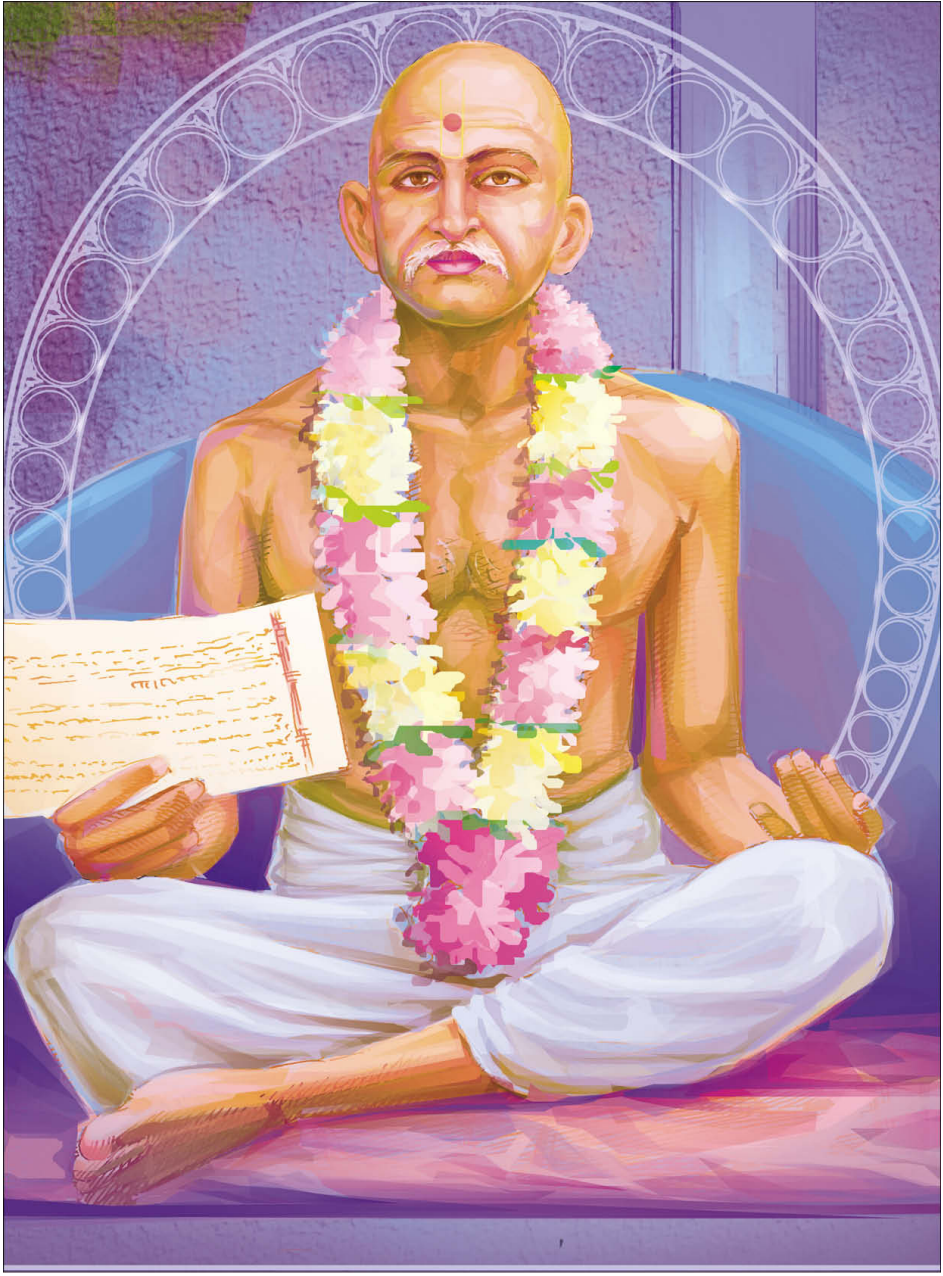
Jaga Bhakta consoled Shastriji Maharaj and said, "My work is now over. So Maharaj is taking me back to Dham. Now you shall begin your work. Both, Maharaj and Swami shall support you and bless you in your work."

True to his promise Swami Jaga Bhakta gave Shastriji Maharaj an opportunity to serve him for two days. Then, on the night of 29 January 1901 (Maha *sud* 10, Samvat 1957), when he was surrounded by all his devotees, Jaga Bhakta suddenly sat up on his bed, said, "Jai Swaminarayan" to all and returned to Dham of his own independent will.

He had earned the blessings of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami by serving him with great devotion and love. Swami Jaga Bhakta's parting created a great vacuum in the Satsang. The traditional Vedic funeral rites were performed, and the body was adorned with new clothes, *kanthi* and garlands of flowers. Then Shastriji Maharaj performed *arti*, followed by all the rest. The body was taken to the cremation grounds in a palanquin. At this cremation site there is a memorial shrine.

Swami Jaga Bhakta's contribution to the great task of spreading the true, pure *upasana* of Akshar-Purushottam was priceless.

8. Shri Krishnaji Ada



Shri Karsanjibhai Indraji Vyas, who was popularly known as Krishnaji Ada, was a native of Mevasa, near Junagadh. His grandfather, Kadva Vyas was a pious Brahmin scholar who had mastered astrology. He was a disciple of Ramanand Swami, who had introduced him to Purna Purushottam Shri Sahajanand Swami. After coming into contact with Bhagwan Swaminarayan Kadva Vyas gave up all other mantras and started chanting the 'Swaminarayan' *mahamantra* continuously.

Indraji Vyas was born into such a noble family. He was pious from childhood. Although he was a householder he led a life of complete detachment. He had two

worthy sons. The elder was called Harjivanbhai and the younger son was called Karsanjibhai. Karsanjibhai was born on 9 August 1834 (Shravan *sud* 5, Samvat 1890). Both brothers had inherited the Satsang culture from their family. Both brothers had great love for each other, but they loved Satsang the most. Karsanjibhai had married Ladkiba, the daughter of Ajramar Dave and Premaba of Amrutvel.

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Once, the two brothers accompanied some *satsangis* to Junagadh for the darshan of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami. At that time, in accordance with Swami's wish, Bhagatji Maharaj was delivering religious discourses there. In the course of one discourse, referring to Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj said, "The one who is seated is Akshar and the one that sleeps is also Akshar. Only if you accept Swami as Akshar, will you be able to go to Akshardham." When Karsanjibhai heard these talks regarding the glory of Swami, he thought, "This Swami seems to be great. He is compared with Dattatray, Jadbharat and Rishabhdev. But what is his real form?"

Bhagatji Maharaj instantly read his mind, and pointing towards Swami, said, "This Swami who seated here is Mul Akshar, the abode of the Maharaj. Let us ask him. He will confirm what I am telling you." Swami endorsed Bhagatji Maharaj's words, "It is as Pragji says." This statement cleared all the doubts from the minds of the devotees and they were all convinced about Swami's divinity.

* * *

Some time after Karsanjibhai had come into contact with Swami, he spoke to Karsanji's father, Indrajibhai, "Here at Junagadh the *brahmacharis* are young. If you are prepared to renounce we will keep you here as a *brahmachari*." Indrajibhai used to spend one month every year in the company of Swami, but as he was worried about his young sons, he asked Swami, "What should I do about my family responsibilities?"

Swami replied, "We will look after your two sons. Shriji Maharaj will look after their welfare. So, give up all your worries, renounce, and live here; this is my wish."

Indrajibhai had great faith in Swami. He freed himself from all the household responsibilities and came to Junagadh. Acharya Maharaj gave him *diksha* and Swami named him Akhandanand Brahmachari.

* * *

Gunatitanand Swami had visited Mevasa twice. On his first visit to Mevasa he could not meet Karsanjibhai as he was away. The next time, in 1867 CE (Samvat 1923), Swami left Junagadh and arrived at Mevasa via Vanthali, Upleta and Dhoraji. Swami was in a hurry to reach Gondal, but he could not refuse the lunch invitation from Karsanjibhai, Harjivanbhai, Shankar Maharaj, Luhar Keshavji, Suthar Meghji and Jhina Thakkar, who loved him immensely. He said to them, "We will eat. Keep the meal ready. Prepare *rotla,* but not ladoos. We will reach early in the morning, eat and then leave."

Early next morning Swami left Kandorda and arrived at Mevasa. Karsanjibhai and Harjivanbhai had kept the food ready for Swami. They had prepared big ladoos with a view to serve one each to every sadhu and devotee. Swami sat for his meal. The ladoos were covered under a *rotla*. When Swami saw the ladoos he disapproved of their loving

trick. Hargovinddasji began to serve the food. As he began to serve the sadhus with two ladoos, Swami stopped him and said, "Give only one ladoo to each of them. Only that many have been prepared." Then Swami ate a little ladoo, *rotlo* and *adad dal*. In the afternoon he conducted religious discourses. Then after a short rest he took their leave. Thus, Karsanjibhai was fortunate enough to serve Gunatitanand Swami.

Swami had instructed Karsanjibhai and Harjivanbhai, "Go to Rajkot and work there as priests. Maharaj shall look after you." In accordance with his command, both brothers went to Rajkot and settled there. Earlier they had worked as scribes in Junagadh and as priests in the Una mandir as per the wish of Swami.

* * *

Karsanjibhai had three sons – Vaijnathbhai, Madhavlalbhai and Mohanbhai. Karsanjibhai used to conduct religious discourses in the Rajkot mandir every morning and evening. People were greatly impressed by his enlightening talks. This made him popular with even the eminent *sadgurus* of Junagadh mandir and they used to invite him to talk to the congregation there. He always preached, "Swami is Akshar and Maharaj is Purushottam." He was very meek and humble. He would not hurt even an ant. His favourite couplet was:

"Nāne se ho nāne rahie, jaisi nāni dub,
Ghās fis sab ud gayā, dub khub ki dub."

He saw the presence of Swami in everyone. So, before the *satsangis,* why would he ever expect honours? He always advised people to behave as the servant of the servants. He could have easily arranged for his personal needs from the beloved devotees. But, in accordance with Swami's command, he regularly visited eight houses to collect alms and gave one-tenth of his alms to the mandir before taking the rest home. Then he would cook his food and eat. People lovingly called him Krishnaji Ada.

* * *

It was during this period that Shastriji Maharaj was studying the philosophy of the Gita from Jivanram Shastri in Rajkot. Many youths and devotees who had faith in Gunatitanand Swami were attracted towards Shastriji Maharaj, impressed by his piety and spiritual knowledge. However, some jealous sadhus and devotees could not stand the increasing popularity of Shastriji Maharaj. So, they decided to humiliate and insult him. They collected signatures on a statement which read, "Shastriji Maharaj should not be allowed to stay at Rajkot mandir." They managed to get signatures from certain leading sadhus and devotees, too.

The devotees, including Krishnaji Ada, who believed in the divinity of Gunatitanand Swami, resolved to back Shastriji Maharaj wholeheartedly. Himrajbhai, who was one of the leading devotees of Gunatitanand Swami, had signed the resolution calling for Shastriji Maharaj's expulsion from the mandir. Himrajbhai was an influential man in the Rajkot mandir. When Krishnaji Ada learnt that he had signed the resolution, he severed all his relations with his *gurubhai* and dear friend, Himrajbhai, forever. He refused to see him again throughout his life. Although he was meek, Krishnaji Ada was very courageous in supporting the devotees of God.

* * *

Shastriji Maharaj, too, respected Krishnaji Ada very much. During his stay in Rajkot, Shastriji Maharaj would tell all who sought his company to go to Junagadh for the darshan of Jaga Bhakta. He also commanded them, "You should go to Krishnaji Ada's house while you are in Rajkot and listen to his spiritual talks." Ada, too, would talk about the greatness of Shastriji Maharaj to the devotees who called on him at his place. He used to tell the devotees, "There is no sadhu in either of the two regions like Shastriji Maharaj. Even at the cost of a hundred lives we must always side with him. He is such a sadhu." Thus, Krishnaji Ada, who was aged and respected as a senior in the Satsang, guided the devotees on the right path by explaining to them the greatness of Shastriji Maharaj.

* * *

Krishnaji Ada remained loyal to Shastriji Maharaj and did not give his signature on the resolution passed by the mandir. After this incident, seven sadhus from Junagadh, led by Vignandas Swami and Yogiji Maharaj, arrived at Krishnaji Ada's house in Rajkot. When it was learnt that these sadhus had come to join Shastriji Maharaj, and that Krishnaji Ada supported them, they barred him from entering the Rajkot mandir.

Due to this announcement no sadhu could go to Krishnaji Ada's house. Yet, he continued to give his learned discourses at home. His devotion and enthusiasm for Satsang had not diminished at all on account of this ugly episode.

Once, Balmukunddas Swami and his group of sadhus arrived in Rajkot from Junagadh. How could Balmukund Swami, who was one of the senior sadhu-disciples of Gunatitanand Swami, resist the temptation of visiting Krishnaji Ada's house? He went there with five sadhus and was very happy to meet him. They spent a long time remembering the old days and then returned to the mandir. None could utter a word against Balmukunddasji.

* * *

Due to continuous harassment from the sadhus and as advized by Krishnaji Ada, Shastriji Maharaj separated from Vartal mandir. In 1907 CE (Samvat 1963) Shastriji Maharaj built the first mandir in Bochasan and consecrated the metallic *murtis* of Akshar-Purushottam there. Now Ada started telling his followers to go to Bochasan. He used to say, "The Akshar-Purushottam philosophy which had so far remained restricted to a corner has now spread throughout the Charotar region. Therefore, those who want to talk about or listen to it openly should go to Bochasan."

Thereafter, in 1909 (Samvat 1865), a *parayan* on the Swamini Vatu scripture was conducted at Bochasan mandir in accordance with Ada's wishes. All the devotees of the Rajkot region attended these discourses. Everyone experienced divine bliss while listening to the discourses of Shastriji Maharaj, Nirgundas Swami and Krishnaji Ada. A newcomer called Govind Bhakta, who had come from Vadhwan served Krishnaji Ada with great devotion and love and won his favour. As Ada was feeling a bit unwell, he stayed in Anand for ten days. He was very pleased with the constant care and service that Govind Bhakta offered and bestowed upon him his blessings. Krishnaji Ada gave much happiness to the *satsangis* of Anand and nearby places by his spiritual talks. On his return to Rajkot, he often remembered the hospitality of the devotees of Gujarat.

* * *

Ada inspired Vignandasji, Yogiji Maharaj and five other sadhus to come to Rajkot from Junagadh. They met Ada there. Shastriji Maharaj, too, was called from Sarangpur. This was the first historic meeting between Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj and it was Ada who had arranged this meeting. These two sadhus had manifest on earth to propagate the philosophy of Akshar-Purushottam. Ada was attacked from all sides for encouraging these sadhus, but he ignored everything. The Satsang shall forever remain grateful to Ada for introducing the illustrious pair of Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj.

* * *

Now Krishnaji Ada was growing old. At the start of 1913 CE (Samvat 1969), he wished to go to Akshardham. He fell ill in the month of Shravan. In accordance with his wish a seven-day recitation of the scriptures was arranged. Telegrams were sent to Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj and Nirgundasji, who were touring in Gujarat. They were asked to go to Rajkot immediately. Ada was greatly pleased to see Shastriji Maharaj. He said to him, “I have been waiting for you.”

Krishnaji Ada had great affection for Yogiji Maharaj from the beginning. He called Gnanji Swami (Yogiji Maharaj) near, blessed him with both hands and said, “Swami, always keep the company of Shastriji Maharaj and act according to his wishes.”

At 2.00 a.m. on 10 October 1913 (Aso *sud* 11, Samvat 1969), Shastriji Maharaj and other sadhus were called from the mandir. Krishnaji Ada said, “Swami, Jai Swaminarayan. Now I am returning to Dham.”

Shastriji Maharaj selected a spot on the bank of the river Aji for the cremation. The cremation ground was purified by sprinkling holy water sanctified by Shriji Maharaj and then Krishnaji Ada was cremated.

Now a small memorial shrine stands there in honour of Krishnaji Ada. The place has become a place of pilgrimage for all *satsangis*.

Glossary

A

acharya Administrative head of Ahmedabad and Vartal regions.

adad dal Black beans; a type of edible pulse.

aksharrup One with Akshar.

Annakut Festival in which many food delicacies are offered to God.

arti Adoration of God with lighted wicks.

atma Soul.

atmanishtha Identity with one's *atma.*

avatari Cause of all incarnations.

B

bati A baked Indian food item.

bawa Ascetics, recluse.

berkho a rosary with large beads.

bhagwati diksha Initiation into saffron robes.

bhairavi rag A particular tune in Indian music.

bhajiya Fried Indian dish.

brahmachari Brahmins initiated as renunciant.

brahmarup Brahmanized.

C

chaturmas Four months of the monsoon.

cheshta Hymns sung before retiring to bed describing the divine form and exploits of God.

D

dal Curry with spices.

darbar Royal court.

datan A variety of small thick twigs used to clean one's teeth in the morning, usually of *acacia arabica* – baval tree.

dharmashala Rest home for pilgrims.

diksha Initiation.

drupad rag A particular tune in Indian music.

dudhpak Sweet, thickened milk.

dukkad A type of drum.

E

ekantik Of divine qualities.

G

gnan Knowledge; wisdom.

godi Hymns sung before evening *arti*.

gopi Women of the cowherd class who were devotees of Shri Krishna.

gurubhai Someone with the same guru.

H

haveli Mansion.

K

kal Time.

kanthi A twin necklace of beads worn round the neck.

kediyu Waist coat.

kothari Chief administrator of mandir.

L

lakh One hundred thousand.

M

mahamantra A powerful spiritual chant.

mahant Head of a mandir.

malvu Embrace.

mangala arti *Arti* performed at sunrise.

mansi puja Mental worship.

maya Illusion.

mukta Released souls.

murti Idol.

N

naishthik vrat Strict vow of celibacy.

nirdosh buddhi Clear conscience.

nishkami Celibate.

P

pad Verse.

paisa Currency valued at one-hundredth of a rupee.

paramhansa The best of the four types of sannyasis.

parshad Renunciant in white robes.

parayan Spiritual discourses.

pativrata Faithful, chaste.

pattar Bowl used by sadhus for meals.

pingal Knowledge of poetry.

prabhatiya Devotional songs sung at dawn.

pradakshina Circumambulation.

prarthana Prayer.

prasad Consecrated food.

premlakshana bhakti Intense, loving devotion.

puri A fried Indian food item.

R

rag Tune.

rajbhog arti *Arti* performed after offering lunch to the deities.

rajogun Quality of passion.

ras Mango juice.

rotli Chapatti.

rotlo Millet bread.

S

sadguru Senior sadhu.

samskar Impressions of past births.

sankhya vartman Tenets of an ascetic.

sankhyayogini Woman ascetic.

sarangi An Indian stringed musical instrument.

saroda An Indian stringed musical instrument.

Sarvamangal Stotra Verses containing the one thousand names of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Satsang Holy fellowship.

satsangi One who practices *satsang*.

shak Vegetable.

sud The bright half of each lunar month of the Hindu calendar.

swabhav Person's nature in the form of habits formed after repeated actions, in this or past births.

swadharma One's own dharma.

T

tamogun Quality of ignorance; darkness.

thal Food offered to God.

U

upasana Mode of worship; philosophical beliefs regarding God.

V

vad Dark half of each lunar month of the Hindu calendar.

vartman Vows.

vatu Talks.

vidyavaridhi Super scholar.

Y

yagnopavit Sacred thread.